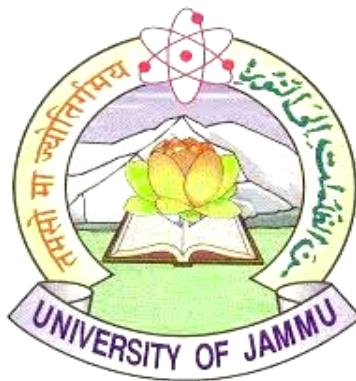


STRATEGIC DESTINATION BRANDING OF SILK ROUTE FOR MAXIMIZING ITS TOURISM POTENTIAL IN INDIA



THESIS

Submitted to

**THE UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU FOR THE AWARD OF DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

In

TOURISM MANAGEMENT

BY

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UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

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**UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU
JAMMU
2016**

CERTIFICATE

Ms. Parvinder Kour, who was registered for the degree of Doctor of philosophy under my supervision, has completed her work. The exact title of her thesis is “*Strategic Destination Branding of Silk Route for Maximizing its Tourism Potential in India*”.

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DECLARATION

I **Parvinder Kour**, hereby declare that the thesis entitled “**STRATEGIC DESTINATION
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PREFACE

In the time of big businesses, tourism industry has been considered as a fastest growing industry. Increased competition and changing demands led the destination marketers to opt for strategic chosen branding concept for inducing a destination brand in visitor's perception and choice list for attaining a competitive advantage over its competitors.

Silk Route as a concept for travel and development especially in India has to deal with the growing battle for tourists' attention and thus it aims to differentiate its tourism offerings and increase its competitiveness. Although its related destinations like J&K, U.P and Sikkim has attained their popularity in India in their own way for the country, but has not been highlighted or presented in terms of Silk Route. The unique part of this concept is that such destinations and more particularly silk route destinations form a complete tourism route which complements could compliment the tourist's experience to travel these destinations. Thus the purpose of the study was to examine the development of new kind of tourism for Silk Route and consequently the following research goal was formulated. The study also intends to provide a set of strategic planning guidelines for the application of branding to Indian Silk Route. This study may be an enabling power for most of such destination authorities and marketers to have a good idea on how to reincarnate create Silk route into an effective and efficient tourism product.

Developing such kind of tourism brand is simply not a one-way road. Destination management organizations and Marketers need to understand what they actually want and how they want others to perceive and then develop a destination based on that information. Travelers always have perception in the mind of the travelers, desired or not desired, which is often expensive and time consuming to change. Therefore, authorities should thoroughly examine what kind of perception they want their destination to possess. For this they need to make a balance of what information they need to send to the tourists and thereby what brand perception or image this information establishes in tourists' mind.

The main focus of the present study were to understand the awareness of tourists about Indian silk route destinations, and to identify the underlying factors on the basis of which destination's brand dimensions are developed; to assess the existing potential of such destinations in terms of tourism further examine their viability; to examine the relationship between the destination brand communication and brand perception and to examine the

impact of brand perception on brand development of Silk Route.

In today's scenario, creating and managing Silk route as an appropriate destination brand in India needs a collaborative approach by the intact destinations so as to create its unique identity in the market. Destination marketers should concentrate on developing efficient communication methods so that they can launch a distinctive and attractive identity for Silk route destinations all together as a single tourism product or asset. Along with that, the findings of the study suggest that destination management authorities should concern themselves for the development of induced Silk route destinations that are somehow on the verge of extinction and the factors which influence intention to visit such destinations under their charge. In fact, destination communication was found to be positively correlated with brand development. Destination marketers should communicate the basic essence of destinations like J&K, U.P and Sikkim whose destinations are linked to Silk Route like Buddhist circuit which may influence the development of silk route as brand by developing strong destination characteristics via destination management tactics. So, destination marketers could highlight their places based on their linkage and real authentication as a part of Silk route by communicating and making people aware about such destinations and their characteristics thus analyzing the perceived benefits and further sources for brand development.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank
ASI	Archaeology Survey of India
BD	Brand Development
CIP	Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme
DC	Destination Communication
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
BCIM	Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar Economic Corridor
BRI	One Belt and One Road Initiative
DMO	Destination Management Organization
FIT	Frequent International Travelers
IHA	Indian Hotel Association
ILFS	Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services
ITDC	Indian Tourism development Corporation
J&K	Jammu & Kashmir
KMO	Kaiser Meyer Olkin
LED	Local Economic Development
MICE	Meeting, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions
PSR	Perception for Silk Route
Q-Q Plot	Quantile-Quantile Plot
SOE	State-Owned Enterprises
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TAAI	Travel Agents Association of India
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
U.P	Uttar Pradesh

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter endeavors to introduce the concept by presenting an outline of the selected topic. This chapter is supported by an overview of the study and provides a primary introduction to the Silk Route and its linkage to India. Following this, the present status of the Indian Silk Route destinations and the need for branding Silk Route destinations will be presented. The study is also supported by maps depicting the Silk Route connectivity; to make the study viable to understand. Eventually, the research background will be presented, as an introduction to the tourism sector, on which this study will be based. It will give a short introduction to the concept of tourism and its impacts on the world's economy and further may present a support to Silk Route branding and revival in a new or contemporary terminology.

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Being defined as one of the largest and fastest growing industries, tourism has given its significant contribution to the world's economy. According to United Nations World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) Report 2013, the market share of rising nations has improved from 30% (in 1980) to 47% (in 2012), and also has been anticipated to meet 57% mark by 2030, which is meant to be equivalent to one billion international tourists' influx, thus increasing the competition among the various destinations to gain largest tourist attraction. Looking to the history of real development of civilization, Silk Route has led a landmark in the history of travel and trade concept. The ancient Silk Route formed a land ridden bridge extended between the Eastern and Western countries and had remained an imperative medium to trade among primeval territories of India, China, Rome and Persia. With the emergence of new terminologies in the travel and trade forms the concept of Silk Route faded among the trades' reformers and even has lost its identification to the existing world.

The long distance travel and exchange across this trade route has remained flourishing for thousands of years and some of these conventional routes are continuing to serve this aspect and bear commercial exchanges. On the first in a series of Silk Route, international organizations of the World Tourism Organization held a meeting in Xi'an

(China) in July 1996 in which a new global marketing strategy was approved by all the participating nations. It was a milestone in the history of Silk Route Marketing, but its relevance was limited to fewer countries especially that participating and not to the other countries that are also a part of this historical and heritage route. The expert committee considering the routes as an element of our cultural heritage, met at Madrid, Spain in November 1994 and defined the heritage route as an amalgamation of substantial characteristics through which the cultural effects derives from interactions & also a multidimensional discourse across nations or regions is obtained, thus demonstrating the relations of movement, along the route, in a definite gap and moment.

One of the foremost steps towards the revitalization of Silk Route is to drive the attention of the tourists towards it. In other words, there is a need of creating awareness and image among tourists. According to Meer (2010), awareness signifies the level of the brand's presence in the customer's psyche so that the target could perceive the quality of the product being offered. Whilst the potential for the development of tourism along Silk Route has been predicted but growth of the industry is constrained by a variety of factors. Also, defining or redefining the concept of Silk Route in modernized and competitive era is quite challenging and in such perspective emergence of 'branding' in tourism terminology could be consent for the development of Silk Route and its induced destinations. A key output of this study is to provide a set of practical guidelines and scenario for the application of the branding strategies for Silk Route that make a complete circuit of local destinations in India.

In addition to enhancing the socio-cultural, economic as well as environmental sustenance of such post-communist civilizations, tourism can also be used to reveal the national distinctiveness of these formerly lesser known destinations or lands (Harrison, 2001). Whereas increase in the competition in this industry has made it difficult for the Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) to create an image among tourists and to make it sustained for a long time especially when there arises the concept of intangibility, which is one of the prime factors to be considered in the destination branding. Moreover, the level of competition among destinations having five-star deluxe facilities and attractions is no longer been enough for the recognition as each destination is substantially defined with such perspectives. Thus, defining the Silk Route through this point of view needs a strategic and contemporary approach. However, the strategic

marketing approach should raise the tourists' awareness about a destination, motivate them throughout the quality perception or influence their loyalty towards the destination (Krajnovic, et al., 2013).

Some observers illustrated the concept of 'Route Development' as the world's best way to safeguard sustenance of tourism sector (ECI Africa, 2006). No doubt the UNWTO and other related organizations are looking further for such aspect, but realistic approach by the induced destinations as India is very much important to understand and present the perception and perfect image of these destinations thus making its marketing easily affordable as well as approachable. The branding of tourist destinations has been discussed in every aspect in various developed and underdeveloped countries. Consequently, the strategic marketing should cautiously define the major premeditated objectives of the tourist destination branding (Konecnik and Gartner, 2006). However, increase in competition and change in the scenario of trade and travel trends has made the Silk Route's concept as an undefined part. Hence, in the extremely competitive and comprehensive tourism milieu, there is a requirement to extend a different identity or a brand based on reality that reflects the basic potency and individuality of its product (Crockett and Wood, 1999).

In terms of India that has also been remained a part of the Silk Route, revitalization of this concept needs to be understood primarily at the regional level. The stretch from Jammu and Kashmir State towards Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim shows evidences to justify India's linkage to Silk Route. Change in the scenario of travel and trade has also changed the identification of all these destinations of Silk Route thus fading or changing their background. In context to Silk Route various countries have acquired their significant positions in the tourism industry as they have received all kinds of attention and requirements for marketing in the world over. But the negligence and avoidance of Silk Route on the part of India has made it unknown to the tourists as well as the industry itself. Cai (2002) in his study has revealed that the title of a destination brand is reasonably predetermined by the real geographical title of the destination. However, geographical isolation from the main resource market may be one of the reasons for the Silk Route destinations that create difficulty in attaining tourism attention.

The present study proposes to study the impact of Silk Route as a destination brand. In a destination of developing country such as India, tourism can be generally

defined to comprise the avenue of goods and services required to sustain tourists, like transport, lodging and bistros. Silk Route is a remarkable case for analysis. As the nation is endowed with various natural resources that form a basis for tourism activities, defining all the intact destinations of Silk Route under a single tourism brand name may help to lessen this gap and create a complete destination range among tourists. Furthermore, creating an awareness of Silk Route may add to the advancement of new resources and branding available ones, especially in the terms of tourism as a most valuable field. Even for the Local Economic Development (LED), tourism routes are of concern as they include tourism planning in a cooperative and collaborative manner to facilitate the area to have advantage from combined marketing efforts (Rogerson, 2007).

Silk Route tourism may provide an interesting phenomenon in cultural studies, as well as tourism studies, for numerous reasons: it demonstrates the neglected causal link between various cultures and tourism, it provides insights into development which leads to the establishment of tourist destinations and the significance that not just the industry of cultural inheritance that tourism sector have, but also the significance of tourists' exchanging their earlier travel and trade understandings. Supporting this Meyer (2004) has added that routes appear to be predominant prospects for lesser developed regions with efficient cultural assets that could attract special interest tourists who usually not only stay longer but could spend a lot on their particular interest. Also, integrating and presenting all these differences into one unified brand name as 'Silk Route', may serve as a variety to the tourists. It is gradually more evident that the competitive future of Silk Route and its destinations depend upon the key factors such as destination identification, destination awareness and destination competence. And, if such factors are to be accomplished, incorporation of branding to the Silk Route is required. Branding is conceivably the most influential marketing tool that exists for contemporary destinations' marketers dealing with tourists who are largely looking for existence accomplishments & experiences, rather than distinguishing them in the more tangible characteristics like accommodations and attractions, etc. (Morgan et al., 2007).

It has been discussed by Quinlan (2008) that the well-being of a tourism destination recalls for exertion, competency, partnerships and equilibrium between various segments. The biggest confront particularly for developing nations like India as a late entrant is how to generate new position and impression in the market. The foundation

of a destination as a brand has to concentrate on various groups of stakeholders, socio-cultural characteristics & understanding of all the intangible and comprehensive characteristics of a place (Munar, 2011) and same is applicable to destinations of silk route with distinct features, climate and tourism resources and attractions as well.

The necessary initial point for development of a route is thus the expansion of a shared custom of teamwork to participate (Rogerson, 2007). Council of Europe (2004) under the title “Idea of shared culture” illustrated the four main objectives:

- To raise the people and young Europeans about the importance of a European cultural identity and citizenship. The European culture resulted from historical mutual exchange, influence across boundaries, and development.
- To encourage intercultural and inter-religious discourse as an information for protecting a better thought and admiration for a European history.
- To safeguard the cultural and natural heritage for improving quality of life. The importance of heritage in relation to the economy, socio-cultural development.
- To give people have pride of place, and to strengthen cultural tourism for sustainable development.’

This statement extends an example and also provides a justification to develop Silk Route as a complete tourism brand for the tourists. At first there is a need for the industry to generate the knowledge among the people about the identity and importance of Silk Route. Secondly, there is also a need to safeguard the cultural and natural heritage and to define it in relation to economic as well as socio-cultural benefits to the intact destinations. And thirdly, there is a need to focus on to provide a sustainable development approach to Silk Route destinations. Major aspect of cultural exchange and the expansion of new fiscal associations and expertise to facilitate export, along with the complete stimulation of a journey and adventure, can be described through historical explanation of the Silk Road. However, the entire route is endowed with impressive monuments and heritage but almost the entire and original road has been disappeared and even lost under the influence of new and emerging routes and highways. Still some uncertainty exists in adopting a best possible practice to implement and the missions required cooperating in the improvement of a strategy and technique for recognition & recommendation of such cultural route (Feng, 2005).

A study was conducted under Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) in 2010, jointly by European Commission and Council of Europe which revealed that in order to support cultural routes for addressing the existing challenges, to cooperate more efficiently trans-nationally and to recognize their prospective as a center for cultural tourism development, defined action is suggested in five major areas:

1. Capacity-creation.
2. System authority.
3. Performance assessment.
4. Brand image and marketing.
5. Support of the key stakeholders.

And while considering Silk Route for the stake of tourism activities either pilgrimage, heritage or cultural route, the same statement stands ethical. In other words, creating a brand name is essential for Silk Route destinations so as to attain a successful hold up strategy and process which is liable to be widespread & exclusive, especially when the transformation in tourism segment continues to shift rapidly towards future and struggle for sustenance from the developed nations remains vicious. For this, an extensive level of harmonization and collaboration is required among the different organizations in destination marketing because of the fragmented character of tourism segment (Roberts and Simpson, 1999; Hall, 2000; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2007). The one basic reason is the lack of vision among stakeholders and industry practitioners about such concept and its utility as a tourist destination.

Nonetheless, the Silk Route regions needs to be identified in terms of potentially productive untouched investment locations. If we look towards the business perspective and consider Silk Route as a product, the foremost notion is “to prepare the final product there is a requirement for identification of its core assets that may finally be branded and offered to the ultimate consumer”. Recognition of Indian subcontinent as a part of Silk Route cluster is just a mere start to the Silk Route initiatives. All that cannot make it a complete tourism brand. Its identification cannot be denied in absence of the small intact regions or destinations available within the country that led the Silk Route foundation in some or other way. In the context of a destination being the central spot for the promotion and mechanism for economic growth, it formulates an intellect that the

destination should be administered as a brand to maintain its individuality & perceived importance in an increasingly viable market (Blackadder, 2006).

The aim of this study is to analyze awareness and knowledge about Silk Route destinations in India among tourists, travel agents and Destination Management Organizations (DMOs). This work focuses to highlight the emerging or already emerged Silk Route destinations which are even modestly recognized and can be of interest to tourism industry practitioners and tour operators whose customers look for newer or nascent destinations. Silk Route requires proper management to develop tourism activities involving tourists, and to make them realize the significance of the various events that formed the route.

The Silk Route itself presents the destination images of the induced countries or destinations that have the resources to attract diverse categories of travelers and most prominently offers corporeal and expressive association among the collaborating destinations. Furthermore, the term “Silk Route” as a brand may provide a multidimensional avenue for the tourism industry. In professional terminology when we think about a brand the very first insight that come to our minds are logos and taglines associated with concerned product. This concept of Silk Route as a destination product is still an unidentified term to Indian tourism industry. According to Munar (2011), the shortage of such possession of the destination goods creates the slogans, logos as well as business promotion the center of the destination brand and signifies the formal components of the brand. Also, at present the requirement is not just the reopening of Silk Route, instead it requires re-visioning to attain a maximum tourism and trade benefits.

As little concentration is given towards the advancement in destination branding theory, this study could present framework to the managers involved in same area & provide a foundation for future research (Hankinson, 2009). In order to endure the competition as a destination, Silk Route has had to scrutinize not only the experiences but also find out the ways that make these experiences stand in destination competition. Along with all this, better home work is required to be done, before making practical references for the Silk Route brand, keeping in mind the political, economic and cultural modifications that have taken place along these regions, even at international level.

In other words, it can be said that the potency of developing tourism along Silk Route in India lies in cooperation, coordination, competence and management of various induced destinations. Besides of considering the various factors involved in the creation of tourism destination this study also intends to focus on four major aspects: destination branding, destination awareness, destination perception and brand communication and development in context to Silk Route destinations in India. Thus, being a service intact industry, Silk Route branding as a tourism destination has to focus even more on entire branding process as the destinations that have efficiently implemented branding strategies recognizes the conduct for branding destination as it can facilitate to reduce any voids existed among destination's potency & perceptions of potential tourists (Morgan et al., 2010).

Furthermore, dynamic nature of the destination itself makes the task of branding of tourist destination difficult for the industry practitioners. All these difficulties may include the difference in the interests and choices of the stakeholders available in the tourism market, the distinction between the presumption and explicit decision making procedure involved and similarly on the other side, respectively the benefits to involved community. And on the other front, approach to analyze the gap of the target market, and also the problems related to financial support of the brand adds to such problem and difficulties.

The major issue of the region is to describe the history, evolution and earlier vigor of the primeval Silk Road into trade prospects for the present and future. It is expected that the procedure of revitalizing the financial system of the Silk Road evolved from centuries of reasonably poor financial performance. The importance of the commercial and merchant groups amongst the various racial classes of the region through the prime period of the Silk Road, and their capability to act as mediators in one of the globe's supreme trading atmospheres, signifies the trade potential of the province.

It is against this backdrop that the study aims to focus and identify the vital success factors in the development of tourism along Indian Silk Route. However, the study also intends to provide a set of practical planning guidelines for the application of the branding concept to Silk Route destinations. Beyond this, the concept of destination branding on Silk Route perhaps induce a potentially significant part in cross-cultural communications. As an alternative to emphasizing previous stereotypes & generating

fresh ones for short-term fiscal profits, branding Silk Route would help different nations to promote better communal understanding and improve global relations.

1.2 SILK ROUTE AS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

Silk Route covers an approximate distance of 5.9 million square kilometers approximately. From 200 B.C., the route has been a mode for contact between people and cultures, promoting the exchange of dialogue, art, religion, ideas & technology. This ancient route was not only a medium for circulating goods, but also been a source of exchanging the splendid societies of, India, China, Persia, Arabia, Greek as well as Rome. In 19th century, Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen (a German geographer) firstly used the title 'Silk Road' that connected Xinjiang (in China) to Central Asia. Afterward, it was extended steadily to connect West Asia, Europe and Africa. It was not only an essential hauling route that connected the prehistoric communities, but was also an alternate source for profitable and civilization interactions among the western civilizations and the oriental communities. Also, it can be termed as a synonym to cross-cultural and economic development between the countries. According to UNCTAD (2009) report; Silk Route represented a joint market of about \$312.3 billion, with an approximate gross domestic product (GDP) of \$2,151. Half of the Silk Route was located in Xinjiang. It was broadened along the Xian towards the east coast of Mediterranean. Xinjiang has remained a major hub as well as a meeting place of ancient western cultures. It was one of the sources of religious interactions like Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Islam and Christianity. However, during the Mongol empire's reign, it experienced an era of decline.

Silk Route actually was a medium for the silk producers to export silk products to various regions. China was the major destination for hybrid silkworms and manufacture silk. A diplomat from Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), Zhang Qian travelled along this road between 138 B.C. to 139 B.C. He actually led a caravan to take gold and silk products to the regions of Loulan (presently known as Ruqiang), Hotan, Huqa, Kashi and Wusum; which is presently known as river Ili valley, and also Dawan, Dayuesi, Kangju, and various other regions of Xinjiang. It was this route that made the introduction of silk items of China, iron products; gold, platinum & bronze sculptures; lacquer ware & bamboo artifacts; medicines, farming & metallurgy practices to the region of Xiyu (Xinjiang of ancient times), India and Europe. On the contrary to this, vegetables like cucumber and animal species like lion, peacock, elephant, camel etc. were transferred to central parts of

China. The middle route rambled west next to the southern base of the Tianshan hills speckled by Korla, Loulan, Churcha and Aksu and further extended towards Pamir's and Mari (in Russia).

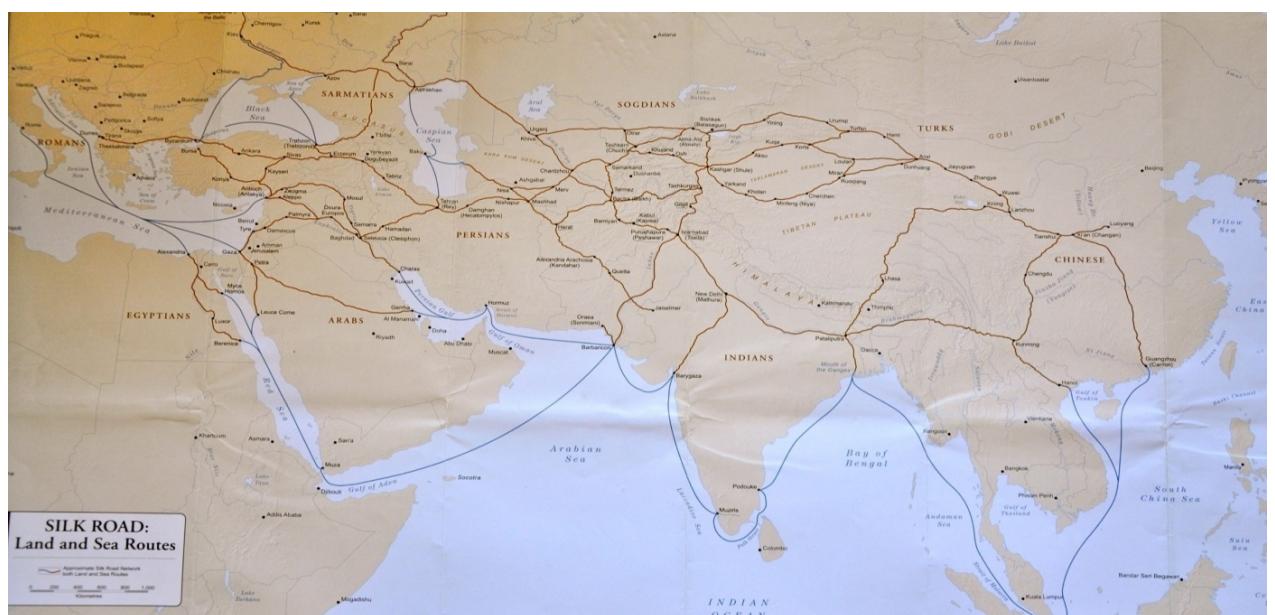
The southern part of the route moves west besides the northern base of Kunlun Mountains, by Charkhilk (in Ruoqiang), Cherchen (in Quemo), Minfeng (in Niya), and Hetian (in Hotan), further joined Kashgarh – as an additional link to Silk Route, further moved towards the Pamirs, and joined India, Afghanistan and Central Asia across Russia to travel towards the Mediterranean coastline or Arabia (Refer to Map 1.1). Generated interests in Fargana Horses led the Han emperors to increase political associations with western sovereignty of the Silk Route. This led to the foundation of silk products of China in the Roman realm. On contrary to this, merchants from India and other like the Kushans, the Sogdians, and the Prathians, took the advantage of such trade opportunity as middlemen. They led the silk trade to afar to the gold, ivory and many other things. Later on the Sogdian merchants became the leading traders in the cities of Samarkand, Balkh and Chanh located along Silk Route.

Occurrence of Buddhist disciple has also led a new dimension to the Silk Route perspective, i.e. religion. India's renowned monk also visited central China's region called Henan via Pakistan (in 147 A.D.) and Afghanistan through Silk Route (in 401 A.D.) correspondingly, to translate books related to Buddhism and make it to join thousands of followers. Chinese renowned monk named Fa Xian from Jin empire (from 265 A.D to 420 A.D.) and Xuan Zang from the Tang empire (from 618 A.D. to 907 A.D.) respectively travelled to India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, many other lands and regions performing disciple rituals in those regions which are situated along the Silk Route (www.Tianshah.net, 2007). It was during the reign of Tang Empire that Buddhism got well flourished in China. However, fall in Tang dynasty created various factors that ruin the significance and vitality of Silk Route. A famous poet of Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368) Yilu Chuai and Qui Chuji (Taoist patriarch) travelled by Silk Route and portrayed the colorful civilization and local custom in Xinjiang and Central Asia.

The western part of this route is supposed to have developed prior to its eastern side, predominantly due to the growth of realms in the west, the territory of Syria and Persia. Being controlled by Middle East, the Iranian empire of Persia also extended its aura to Indian Kingdoms with trade that already started to influence their cultures.

However, Chinese silk had already been introduced to Mediterranean when Alexander moved to Indus River into Central Asia, i.e. by 4th century B.C. At that time, India was not really known to the outside world till 7th century after which information sources began along Silk Route. During this period, the increase in Islam commences that create an impact on Asia, thus created a gap between the east and west. Further the Muslims started to work as middlemen to induce the trade relations between these regions (Hopkrik, 1984; Wild, 1992). But the conflict between Muslims and Christians worlds adversely affected the trade and due to this reason Christian world started moving towards Central Asia.

On the other hand Mongols led a change in scenario of Silk Route. Several of the communities of Turkestan which had increased offensively westwards towards Persia and Arabia, started accepting Islam and which further led Islam to increase across extreme areas of Central Asia, but did not spread much far as the tribes moved across the large Mongolian grasslands (Alikuzai, 2011). In order to expand their aura of influence they elected Genghis Khan as their leader in 1206. Setting an empire they conquered the Central Asia that involved the regions from China to the regions of Persia and further extended to the extreme west towards Mediterranean. Though they moved towards the west they ruined earlier Han city of Jiaohe, and Turfan. Death of Genghis Khan and raise of Kublai Khan led a change and emergence of Yuan dynasty in south China.



Map 1.1: Network of roads and trails which make up the ancient Silk Route

(Source: Angelanealworld.com, 2011)

Kublai Khan, in particular, has been stated to have been quite considerate to the majority of religions and in lieu of this a great community of various countries and belief participated in trade across Asia and further settled in China (Hopkirk, 1984). It was during this period people observed religious liberalism. In 1275, Marco Polo (adventurer from Italy) visited Dadu, presently known as Beijing along Silk Route and described the culture and traditions of Pamirs, Kashi, Shache and Hotan. Before returning to Italy by ship through Sumatra, he travelled quite extensively in China and further India, Hormuz and Constantiople (Bohong, 1989).

Political volatility in China created economic decline and lower aptitude to get luxurious products into the nation, and eventually the Ming empire (from 1368 to 1644) blocked China to the exterior world (UNCTAD, 2009). On the contrary, other countries started their own production for silk and travelling pattern got diverged to sea route as sea transportation was cheaper than land transport system. However, the conflicts in trade relations among various regions gave a way to sea route. Besides the overland problems of tribal policies, sea route also suffered bad weather conditions and pirate attacks. It also supported in maintaining political relations with other countries which further helped in increasing the trade volume of China.

Along with this a new religion Islam started making its extension from west all over region of Taklamakan. This region also represents the best example of grottoes to the world. Surrounded by the desert, hills are mostly of sandstone that lies along rivers or streams carving cliffs. Further, it was converged to cross Iranian plateaus, and finished on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean in cities- Antioch and Tyre (Elisseeff, 2000).

Under the influence of different tribes and dynasties Silk Route had witnessed various art forms and religious structural formations as well as destruction. Silk Route holds many passes, many passes, castles, grottoes, tombs, post houses and beacon towers. The generated interests of foreign scholars in 19th century added a revitalization perspective to the Silk Route. Though, the existence of many ancient cities was duly confirmed only after 1863 when an official trip was conducted by Survey of India to explore the lost cities of Silk Route connectivity. After the visit of a delegation related to trade in Kashgar (in 1890), the British worked to set up consulate in 1980 whereas, Russia was assumed as a threat to trade development among India and Kashgar. Such struggle among these destinations was entitled as 'Great Game'. British agents travelled

along Himalayan regions, i.e. from Ladakh to Kashgar and collected the every possible information regarding Silk Route. On the other hand, Russians entered from the north; most of them were botanist, geologist or cartographers to gather the information about Silk Route cities. On reaching to the hands of European Orientalists, prepared manuscripts and detailed information made the people to move for Silk Route expedition.

Journey of Swede Sven Hedin in 1985 led a stepping stone to Silk Route revival. He travelled across the Pamirs to Kashgar, and other isolated parts in the region. He also travelled across Taklimakan. At the later stage of his expedition he discovered Loulan and other the ruined destinations on the south side of the desert. Located in the northwest area of Lop Nor the prehistoric citadel of Loulan represents a rich history with affluent travel and trade. At present only the remnants of the citadel enclosed by desert can be seen. The ancient relics are properly conserved in citadel of Turpan's Gaochang and Jiaohe. Also more than hundred mummies were discovered from the prehistoric Astala group mausoleums near the citadel.

Besides the Russians, French and Japanese followers of such expeditions, Sir Aurel from Britain and Albert von Coq from Germany are much renowned. They discovered and wrote about the previous Buddhist culture that existed in the region of Taklimakan. A large number of manuscripts, silk temple posters and Buddhist paintings were found at Mogao grottos in Dunhuang. Written in Chinese, Sanskrit, Tibet, Uyghur and other lesser known languages, manuscripts depicted stories and folklores from Tang dynasty. The frescoes at Dunhuang were from finest across whole Silk Route, and several of the finest ones were taken by Langdon Warner (an American professor) and his colleagues (Alikuzai, 2013).

Restoration of Silk Route destinations and related assets are still in progress. However, the assets and evidences that support the Silk Route existences are scattered all around the museums of various countries. Such collections can be observed in the Delhi (India), British Museum and in Berlin. Taklimakan has a regained its position to some extent among the people that further led to the existence of different races other than Han, like Tibetans and Mongolians in the east part of the area and other like Tajik, Kazakhs and Uzbeks of the west. The most of the travelers visiting Silk Route destinations are from Japan who prefers to visit Buddhist sites (China pages, n.d.)

As an initiation to the Silk route revival, Foreign Ministers of twelve Asian countries signed an agreement to restore the Silk Road in late 1990s. In the first step to this agreement, three-lane highways were constructed whereas they were already existed in Turkey and Iran. And other portion of such development is being considered in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. The political and fiscal scenario of the modern Silk Route was changed significantly in 1991 with the disintegration of Soviet Union (UNCTAD, 2009). Trades inside Central Asia get distorted after the break-up of Soviet Union, because of broken business links and impeded transportation system due to the restrictions along the borders. Due to the restrictions across new borders and political unrest in the region, intraregional business deals declined to approx 50% between 1992 and 2002 (Asian Development Bank, 2004). As result of this Central Asian countries adopted a new economic approach like privatization of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), thus presented an integrated and liberalized approach towards development process.

On estimation to Silk Route economies UNCTAD (2009) had analyzed that besides of facing the economic crisis, the Central Asian countries would grow by 2010. In the meantime, there existed considerable chances for governments to drive ahead with desirable monetary and trade reforms; in fact it appears that the Central Asian markets have been reasonably progressive with their economic and fiscal alternatives to the crisis (ADB, 2009). Restructuring and reconsideration of trade and business opportunities among the Silk Route countries may provide a futuristic aspect of economic development and prosperity. And once development be considered and prepared at regional or destination level like India, in terms of intraregional travel and trade activities like movement of resources, freight and community, the Silk Route will regain its essential place for utilizing business and other investment prospects with South, East & Western Asia and Europe.

Institutionalization of Silk Route connectivity was led again in the limelight by 21st century. As an advent to this initiative the thirty-sixth annual Smithsonian Folk life Festival on the National Mall (in Washington, D.C.) in 2002 led an example to this. Entitled as “The Silk Road: Connecting Cultures, Creating Trust”, the fiesta represented the contemporary and discrete cultures of various Silk Route countries and it was also intended to raise the sympathetic issues among the nations as a response to 9/11 attack.

Hitherto the countries like Russia, China, Tibet, India, Pakistan and Kazakhstan and so on, share the boundaries with each other; the number of people in all these countries is still unaware about this historical linkage at international level within these neighboring countries. In order to uplift the linkage between all these countries the China in 1990 took initiative in reframing this Route and same was put with the WTO for implementation but in our India it is still unattentional even at the regional level as this route falls in the conflict sensitive areas may it be international (China- India, etc.) or national (Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura etc.), so putting it back to the track the study is emphasized to make branding and marketing strategies for its upliftment and acquaintance within and outside the country.

1.3 INDIA'S LINKAGE TO SILK ROUTE

Trade has always remained a major cause of development of Indian civilization. In fact it has been responsible for the emergence of various empires, merchants and artisans in India. Overall 'Route' led a significant role in Indian perspective. Silk Route was a major cause of cross cultural development in India. It was one of the major causes of connectivity to rest of the world. Over the time, it emerged to be linked not only with a sequence of transport corridors, but also with new ideas and associations between India and Central Asia.

Based on a defined network of routes it mainly stretched from east to west, other than with linkage into southern Iran, the northern part of Eurasian grassland and further south, above Hindu Kush to the Indian subcontinent (Khan, 2005). Much of the region of Central Asia lies with deserted area. On the north east area it is covered with Gobi desert whereas from the south it is covered with it is intact with Himalayas, Karakorum and Kunlun ranges that separates India from central Asia. And from the north it is covered with Tianshan and from west there lies Pamir ranges. The travel was certainly facilitated by the large numbers of available entry points from Kashmir in the north to Sindh in the south of the north-west boundary (Gopal, 2001)

The period from 2nd millennium to end of the 3rd millennium B.C that the evidences for cultural and economic exchanges among India and Central Asian countries through Silk Route can be driven. Ancient Vedic literatures like- Rigveda, Ather Veda and various Samithas contain information about the presence of Indo-Aryan tribes on the

territory of Kazakhstan and Central Asia (Fazylovich, 2006). Much emphasis has been placed on the India's association with Central Asia from the 16th century when Mughals established their existence in India. Conversely the relationship between Silk route and India is much older than this. India's contribution to the Silk Route came into limelight in 5th century with the spread of Buddhism. It was accounted to the linkage to outside world with the journey of a Chinese monk Xuanzang, who travelled to India through the northern suburbs of the Tarim Basin and further travelled across Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. Silk Route had also been a source for the flow of Greek art from Europe to India and Buddhism from Indian subcontinent to the outer world. The sites that showed the evidences for linkage with Buddhism had also supported the existence of Sogdians around those places or destinations. From their homeland in Samarkand and the Zerafshan River Valley (today known as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan), they spread their approach towards west towards Black Sea, south across the peaks of Kashmir valley, and to the Southeast Asia harbours (Waugh, 2010). Fa Hein and Hiuen Tsang were also among the Chinese travellers who visited India through these routes. The name of Kashmir valley was also inscribed in Hanshu, the annals of the Hun dynasty of China written between 125 B.C and 25 A.D. According to Hanshu, Kashmir was large state which entailed, greater Kashmir and at that time some part of Punjab and Sindh, Afghanistan, Central Asia and Tibet were part of Kashmir kingdom.

Research notes by Fa Hein's on Buddhist Country and Hiuen Tsang on Tang's Xiyu added a remark to the testimony of prehistoric Xiyu, India and the Silk Road. It was also through this route that Indian monk visited central China's destination Henan all the way via Afghanistan and Pakistan (in 147 AD and 401 AD respectively), to interpret Buddhist manuscripts & enrol followers to Buddhism. Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) was one of the first traveller from west who travelled along Silk Route. During his conquest for around 10 years, he travelled across Central Asia, the Persian Empire and North India. All this opened ways for trade between the East and the West.

Further, in 637 a renowned Chinese Buddhist scholar and translator, Hieun Tsiang during his overland journey to India (c. 602 – 664) visited Lumbini, before he was moving to Kushinagar (the place where Buddha passed away), and to Sarnath in present India (where Buddha had delivered his first oration) (Bernstein, 2001; Wriggins, 2004). These travellers and researchers left the Silk Route from Kashgar or Khotan,

navigating the deserts of Taklamakan and Gobi and moved across the Karakorum or Himalayan stretch towards India to arrive at Buddhist road connecting Peshawar (in today's Pakistan) and Pataliputra (modern day Patna, India), in order to reach the destination of their pilgrimage. They took the voyage to Ramagram (in present Nepal) and covered an estimated distance of about hundred kilometres and also visited the holy places of Kapilavastu, Lumbini (Von der Heide, 2012).

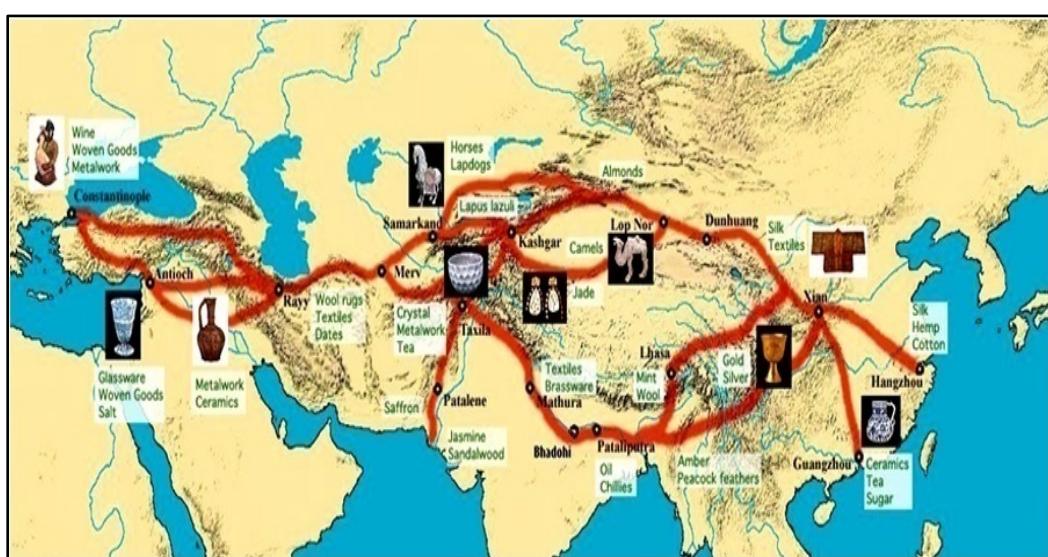
Considering significance of Mathura (India), which was a major business and trade source, situated on the juncture of Uttarapatha and Daksinapatha, through a route which passed through Indraprastha (modern Delhi) and further was linked with Central Asia and China. By the fifth Century B.C., all through the period of Buddha, it was a main conurbation. It was the center of the Surasena territory (one of the sixteen Mahajanapadas of the era). During the reign of the Kushanas, Mathura observed its 'golden age'. In proficient authority of sovereigns like Kanishka, Huvishka, and Vasishka, the skills flourished and economic possessions developed. It emerged as a seat of authority at the time of Mauryan age, during the progressive reign of Emperor Ashoka up to the Gupta period (4th Century A.D.).

After the two decades of the visit of Hieun Tsiang to Lumbini, a Chinese scholar named Wang Huen Tse (approxiamtely 643 A.D.) from Xian visited the destination through this route. It has also been identified that Wang Huen Tse travelled across Tharchindo and Thindafu/Sindafu (located presently in Sechuan), Lhasa and Shigatse along the Trans-Himalayan range. In this way he travelled across Kathmandu valley to become the Chinese representative of the king of Magadha (in Pataliputra) (Chopra, 2003). Offshoot of the ancient trade route which enters Sikkim came from Lhasa, passing through Chumbi Valley via Nathula Pass & ultimately covered the docks of Tamralipta (present known as Tamluk, West Bengal). It was from Tamluk, the route took a way to the sea and moved to Sri Lanka, Bali, Java and rest parts of the Far East. Significance of Tamralipta has also been mentioned in Fa Hein's accounts (400 A.D.) as a busy sea-route on Bay of Bengal.

For about 400 years, the south west part of Silk Route via Nathu La was frequently maneuvered by Lhasa Newars. They were the leading émigré merchants from Kathmandu valley who do business in Tibet for centuries. They travelled along Tibet, Nepal and Gangetic plains of Eastern India through the Silk Route, and developed a

major cultural and economic connection between Central Asia and South Asia. The Lhasa Newars carried their trade over the Nathu La and Jelep La passes which were approachable through Kalimpong (located in West Bengal) and Gangtok (located in Sikkim). In 1962, Sino- Indian War ended the trade due to the shutdown of Nathu La Route. For centuries, traders and herdsmen travelled through Nathu La towards the Chumbi Valley, a part of Tibet between Sikkim and Bhutan. The doorway for muleback silk procession — the other bypass taken was Jelep La which connected Lhasa to Kalimpong. It is also even believed that Dalai Lama in 1956 travelled though this route to join the 2500th Buddha Jayanti celebrations.

Much of archaeological evidences have been found along Kali Gandaki River in Nepal that depicts the trade relations of India, Tibet and Central Asia. Connecting the land of Varanasi, Bodhgaya (Uttarpradesh) to Kapilavastu and Lumbini, Bhutwal and Ridi areas of Nepal further it move towards Mustang region of Nepal. The extended version of this area is then located to the West Tibet and Brahmaputra valley from where it moves towards the Khotan and Kashgar via Ladakh (Jammu and Kashmir). Being used as a major connectivity route, Jammu remained a connecting destination for the valley to the rest of the India. Hieun tsang, the famous Buddhist monk who supposed have travelled to Kashmir in 633A.D. mentioned about Pan-nu-tso (modern day Poonch) and Ho-lo-she-pu-to (modern day Rajouri) (Beal, 1981). He entered India through Udabhandha (presently known as Muzaffarabad); Urasa (present Uskara) and further came the valley via Baramulla ravine (Schewartzerg, 1980).



Map 1.2: Map showing Silk Route connectivity in India

(Source: Isikkim, 2011)

However in 1812, Mir Izzatullah travelled along this route and was the first to provide a detailed account of this route and related experiences (Izzatullah, 1843). It was also due to such advent of religious concepts, that obscure cities like Lhasa emerged as benchmark for religious empowerment even by being situated at the remotest nook of the Himalayas. In other words, Silk Route travel emerged as powerful tool of development for such underdeveloped and remote areas thus, make to get highlighted in the market for their potential assets and resources.

Looking from the trade point of view, India has been considered as chief exporter of goods from the prehistoric times. Apart from other products, Delhi was a centre for export of copper and brass vessels and Agra as well as Bihar exported copper, brass articles, salt, pulses, and forks and knives (Khan, 2005) (Refer to Map 1.2). Keen interest of Delhi Sultans in regional trade also led to sustenance of Silk Route concept. Iltutmish (1211-36) and Balban (1266-87) both made special efforts to restrain avid tribal groups who were obstructing business and trade movement along caravan route (Wink, 2001). In fact north-western trade route of India remained active during the early modern era as well. During 19th century Sir Aural Stein, the Hungarian- British archeologist made his remarks to the Silk Route history by conducting an expedition along Silk Route. He followed a converse route adopted by Huan-Tsang, from India to Central Asia and found a number of evidences and documented relics written on wood and paper in different scripts, including Aramaic.

On the other hand political discrepancies among the Central Asian countries like Great Britain, Russia and China led a drastic change to trade relations thus affecting the Silk Route travel in 19th century. Nevertheless the preset as well as the scrutiny of future projection for the Central Asian Regions and India will levied on some supposition about the global economy. In proposition to this India has also supported the Silk Route revival efforts by the Eurasian regions. India has also anticipated in the various development projects of Iran and Afghanistan to boost the economic resources of the Eurasian states as well the Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea Region.

Policy makers and analysts of India consider the Central Asian region as an imperative part because of its strategic position, approximately (Tajikistan) 20 km. from greater Kashmir and its energy assets (Sachedeva, 2006). Also on 15 February 2006 India was officially invited to join the \$5 billion pipeline project. Further, the India government

formally approved its involvement in gas pipeline project of TAPI which include Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan- India in May, 2006 (Govt. of India, 2006). India has also followed to develop the soft power by the historical linkages other than the Indo-Soviet Treaty of alliance to the Mughal era and Silk Route.

India has recently moved forward for utilizing energy resources available in Russia which is the second a largest oil producers and leading gas producer in the world. It is also seeking to make investments in Sakhalin-3 projects, which has been anticipated to embrace 770 billion cubic meters of gas and 4.6 billion barrels of oil along with spending the shared Russian-Kazakh Kurmangazy oil field in Caspian Sea (Bajpaei, 2005).

In many instances, India has tried to obtain energy resources from some of the most unbalanced divisions of the world, like Sudan where it devoted 11.5 billion dollars in July 2004 (Bajpaei, 2005). In fact the chase for energy resources on the global level is much more than a mechanism for cooperation and coordination as it can for variances and can be added as outsourcing criteria for the area of controversy between India and west.

In a recent summit meeting, the Petroleum Ministers of India, Bangladesh and Myanmar in Yangon, granted the construction of 900 km gas pipeline from Myanmar's offshore territory to Kolkata, crossing through Arakan state of Myanmar, the Indian territories of Mizoram and Tripura and Bangladesh and in exchange to this Bangladesh is pushing for developing the trade corridor with Nepal and Bangladesh through India (Bajpaei, 2005).

With the availability of natural assets, strategic location, political scenario, and the backgrounds of the political influence, India is using possible conventional policies for economic transformation. On refining these trade or business settlements there emerges a new picture of India in Silk route trade and hence provide a contemporary approach to the Silk Route destination investments at the global level thus incorporating the cooperation and coordination among the various countries under the influence of new requirements of economic development. And if we talk about the tourism perspective there is a requirement for observing opportunities through crises. Nevertheless tourism has also widened its scope to business world and has referred a name to such opportunities business travel as i.e. MICE (Meeting, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) tourism.

1.4 PRESENT STATUS OF SILK ROUTE DESTINATIONS IN INDIA

Various researches (like Thingo and Von der Heide 1998a & 1998 b; Von der Heide, 2006, 2010, 2011 & 2012) have revealed the significance of Silk Route especially since the 11th century that created Buddhist cultural landscapes especially around Central Asia, Kashmir, West Tibet and Northern India. In addition to this, Archeological survey of India has identified and enlisted twelve major sites to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) & World Heritage Centre in 2010 that shows connectivity between Silk Route and Indian subcontinent and all the destinations have been envisioned the destinations forming a stretch from the states of Jammu and Kashmir to Sikkim.

Considering the tourism potential of the Silk Route destination in India, it has a variety to offer to the tourists of every taste and choice. Starting from the Jammu and Kashmir that led a significant remark to the Silk Route connectivity, the destinations still need to be discovered and renewed at tourism point of view. For the nature and adventure lovers Nubra Valley that lies on the ancient Silk Route that connected the medieval city of Leh, the capital of Ladakh, to Central Asia, offers a great opportunity. Two rivers, the Nubra and the Shyok, bring life to the valley that is separated from the rest of the world by some of the world's highest mountains. To visit here, tourists have to drive over Khardung La (located at an altitude of 18,380 ft) which is well-known as the world's utmost motorable peak passage (Rommi, 2010). Moreover the route across Jelep-la was once historically utilized regularly for trade and the reopening this pass would provide a thrust to economic movement which further will lead the Kalimpong to attain its faded grandeur (Harris, 2008).

Additionally, Gurez valley is also one of the destinations of Silk Route that connected the valley of Kashmir to Gilgit, extending further towards Kashgar. Archaeology survey of India has found so many inscriptions in the north of Gurez Valley, particularly in Chilas that shows a close association with those discovered in Kharoshthi, Brahmi, Hebrew, and Tibetan. The other important archaeological site located in Gurez Valley includes Kanzilwan. It is believed that last council of Buddhism had held here.

Kashmir was the source of transmission of Buddhist disciplines and traditions to Tibet and China. On contrary to this Silk Route network also intends to serve the tourists with its historical glory as temples, forts, sarais, etc. For example importance of the Silk

Route can also be discussed with the presence of Buddhist Sarai in Safa Kadal (Kashmir) that symbolizes India's connections, with Central Asia through Silk Route. Looking into this decayed building of Safakadal at Shahr-e-Khaas one can scarcely imagine that the place once was a major international trade center for the central Asia till some six decades ago. The Mughal Emperors are supposed to have developed this place as a transit campsite for central Asian merchants on journey. Ultimately, the site developed as a business centre and attained significant value on international trade record (Ashraf, 2007). Also, the archeological site of Harwan has been identified by the Archaeological Survey of India in 2010 as a Silk Route destination as the ruins and evidences presents a close association to Shadarhadavana and is supposed to be the hub of the 4th Buddhist council held during the sovereignty of Kanishka. The most imperative characteristic of this place are its archaeological artifacts like terracotta titles, which have been used to embellish the Chaitya or Buddhist temple.

The district Baramulla (Kashmir region) remained a major hub for the Buddhism. Other than Harwan, the ancient sites of Hushkapur (present Ushkur) have its significance towards such religious and cultural transformation in the state as well as in India. Situated on the left bank of Jhelum River, the ancient site of Hushkapur is supposed to have been established by Huvishka, a sovereign from the renowned Kushana dynasty that ruled different parts of Afghanistan and India during the first three centuries AD. On entering the Kashmir, the Chinese traveler of 7th Century, Hieun Tsang stayed at Ushkur and expressed it as a prosperous Buddhist centre. Giving an overview of the unexcavated stupa, Archaeological Survey of India in their report describes that, the locality includes the relics of a Monastery called the 'Jayendra Vihar', and the formation was assigned by local tradition to one 'Praveraasena' in A.D. 500. Terracota heads found at Ushkur (Baramulla) are similar to the terracota heads of Buddhistavas excavated at Adzhina-tepe or Hadda in Afganistan.

Parihaspora Buddhist Site is another archeological site in Kashmir that needs a due discussion in terms of development and inclusion in tourism map. This Buddhist sites was developed by renowned King Lalitadita (695-731 A.D.) & afterward he declared it his and Kashmir's capital. Presently, Parihaspora is famous by the name of Kane Shahr, which stands for 'city of stones'. The ancient remains can still be seen at four sites, which are known as Dewar Yekhmanpur, Govardhan karewa (Wudur), Teirgam and Budh

karewa. It was identified by experts of archaeology that the site of Parihaspora has remained home to many spiritual and mythological structures and castles. Turkish monk of the king, famous as Chuknan, had designed a Stupa in this town, remains of which still exist. Destruction of this beautiful town is supposed to be due to numerous conflicts between leaders and the last destruction of this town is attributed to Alexander (1379-1413 A.D.). However, the structure of Palaces and Wats (temples) are still in existence since the period of Sangram Raj (1003-28 A.D.). It is also assumed that during the era of Kushan (79-15 B.C.), a beautiful Bodh Vihar was built here. Researcher have also identified that the 3rd Budh Meeting of Kashmir was held here in 79 B.C.

In addition to all this Jammu division of J&K state also represents an insight to the Silk Route connectivity in reference to archaeological site at Ambaran in Aknoor region of Jammu. This 2,000 years old archaeological sites was explored by Archeological survey of India during 1990-2001. It is estimated that during the Ashoka's sovereignty, Majhantika on the way to came to this place before moving towards the Kashmir valley and introduced Buddhism in the lands known to Kalhana as Madradesh (present Jammu), the region between Chenab and Ravi.

Moving further towards Delhi province whose significant contribution to the Silk Route connectivity is inscribed in literature by the name of Indraprastha (Old Fort/Purana Quila). Until 12th century the village called as Indapat and derived from the title Indraprastha, lay in the premises of Purana Quila/ Old Fort until 12th century. It was in 1969 to 1973 that the site of Indraprastha (Purana Qila or old Fort) was excavated and thus yielded constant cultural progression from 4th century B.C. to late medieval period. However its significance was supposed to have been declined generally by the Gupta period and hence may be a reason that it has not been mentioned anywhere in Chinese traveler Huen Tsang's travel account. Also the inscriptions found to the south of Srinivasapuri i.e. Aravallis shows an association to the other sites situated in the locality of Indraprasatha (Old Fort/Purana Quila) and Tilpat as they all are located on the banks of Yamuna River, thus presenting a layover to the presence of a freeway in the pre-Christian epoch. In fact the route through which Indraprastha was connected rest of the Country i.e. with the west, north-west, north and China added an approach to the define Silk-Route connectivity as it acted as a source through which the assets of the different divisions of the realm were traded regardless to its precincts.

The major center of power during the Kushanas' rule, Mathura had a considerable contribution to the trade and cultural transformations in India. Giving a further linkage to Silk Route, the land of Mathura created its position as a hub of trade and convention spot for diverse cultures. The Buddhist monasteries that were constructed here, established significant patronage from King Ashoka. Mathura was also defined by Ptolemy, the Chinese travelers Fa' Hien (who travelled India from 401 to 410 A.D.) and Xuan Zhang (634-762 A.D.) in their travel documents. It is pertinent to note that among the main branches of proto-Mahayanist schools or Buddhist schools has been located in the region of Mathura and the similar has also been located in Gandhāra (which now includes Afghanistan and some part of Punjab). It was a hub for Sarvastivadins who were having belief in the pictorial arts and may be responsible for the plenitude of depictions here, as they were at Amarāvatī and Kizil (Prebish, 2010). Various archaeological excavations, relics as well as Buddhist stupas confirmed Mathura as a linkage site to Silk Route however its significance has been lost or faded under the lesser known facts to the tourism world.

Renowned to the tourists for its Buddhist sites and attractions, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar had also remained a part to Silk Route connectivity in India. Located 10 km from Varanasi, Sarnath is among the most imperative and venerated destinations of Buddhists. It is assumed that more than 2500 years ago, after attaining enlightenment in Bodh Gaya, Lord Buddha visited Sarnath to deliver his first sermon. After that, a number of stupas were constructed over here and among them most popular ones was built by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century B.C. and the 11th century A.D. Chaukhandi Stupa, Dhamek Stupa, Mulagandha Kuti Vihar are among the major sites of Sarnath and some of them have been turned into ruins due to negligence by the authorities.

Once remained the center of primeval Kosala Mahajanapada, Sravasti is a main Buddhist pilgrimage destination in India. Saravasti was established by the legendary King Sravasta. Lord Buddha and his devotees came & sermonize here for over 24 years. This primeval destination witnesses ancient stupas, beautiful temples and monasteries among which the ruins of Sahet, Mahet Jain temple and monasteries near JetvanaVihara like Sri Lankan, Chinese, Myanmarese and Thai monasteries are available for the tourists.

Located in the state of Uttar Pradesh, Kushinagar is renowned due to its linkage with Lord Buddha who is said to have achieved Mahaparinirvana (the highest stage of

salvation). It is also assumed that in 543 B.C. Lord Buddha have offered his last sermon at Kushinagar. The city was flourished till about 12th century A.D. However the extensive excavations started in 1861 at the place resulted in the reincarnation of some major stupas linked with Buddha in the city.

Another destination of great significance for Buddhists is the Sariska. Ruins of many ancient stupas and monasteries are located here. A temple devoted to Bisari Devi and the explored Ashokan elephant pillar are well-known to the tourists.

Bihar is one of the next major destinations in this linkage of Silk Route's stretch in India. The destination of Gaya sets a remark to the Buddhists' pilgrimage centre in Bihar. It was near this city, the Buddha attained Nirvana (enlightenment). The tree where Buddha took shelter became famous as 'the Bodhi tree' and the place as 'Bodhgaya'. Nowadays, it has become a central place of pilgrimage. Bodhgaya also houses numerous monasteries, and among them several were established by Buddhists of Japan, Thailand, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka etc. Therefore, it is also a major pilgrimage centre for foreign travelers. Furthermore Vaishali is another place of religious importance as well as Silk Route connectivity. Buddha offered his sermon at this holy land. Vaishali was also considered to be among the most primitive states in the world (6th century B.C.). Being the native land of Lord Mahavira, Vaishali is also revered to Jains.

Many of the sites like Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Lumbini, Kushinagar has been developed by the ministry of Tourism in India as a major Buddhist pilgrimage circuit. The relic stupas of Piprahwa, Amaravati, Nagarjun konda etc. and the excavated stupas of Vaishali relatively depict a closer association to each other. Correspondingly, pillar at Vaishali with a cubic abacus is considered to be the most primitive one and is considered to be the only one which is un-inscribed. On comparing excavations of Sravasti with other Buddhist places like Vaishali & Bodhgaya of Bihar region, Kaushambi, Piprahwa, Sariska, Sarnath and Kushinagar of Uttar Pradesh, it depicts close association with relics found at all these sites hence depicting a major trials Lord Buddha's life.

The various sites of Sikkim had variety of destinations contemplating the Silk Route history in Indian scenario. Zuluk is one of the major destinations of Silk Route in Sikkim. The less explored small rocky terrain is located in the lower Himalayas of the East Sikkim and was well-known in account of Silk Route's connectivity. At present

Zuluk is attaining its place as the tourism attraction but still tourism is in its nascent stage. Lack of facilities and infrastructure allows at best a maximum of 50 tourists' accommodation there and also a special permission is essential to visit Zuluk (or Jhuluk) and such authorization needs to be obtained from Rangoli.

Nathang Valley presents another remark to the Silk Route destination in the state of Sikkim and at 13500 ft above lies Ladakh of the eastern division of India. It serves as a base point for Padamchen, Genmochen, Thambi View Point, Kupup Lake, Tukla Valley, Baba Mandir and all other attractions in the Silk Route circuit. Furthermore Jelepla Pass is also an important destination that connects this India to rest of the world through Silk Route. Also pronounced as Jelep La, offers all weather passage to India and Tibet. The term Jelepla is derived from '*Jelep*' means lonely and '*La*' means pass in Tibetan. This pass and route connects Lhasa to India.

The significance of the state Sikkim cannot be completed without mentioning Nathula Pass which is located at the Indo-China Border. It joins the Sikkim to Tibet Autonomous Region in China. It was once a historical Silk Route linking Lhasa in Tibet and plains of Bengal. Due to the border restrictions special permission is required to visit this place.

Refining all previous discussed destinations may provide a range of resources as well as assets to the tourist and tourism industry thus offering the tourism from pilgrimage to adventure, from historical to nature tourism and in fact a lot more. But its ultimate connectivity to the early history of Silk Route needs a due evaluation and recognition. Furthermore the eventual crisis of 1947 in Jammu & Kashmir and the subsequent shutting of Silk Route brought an end to its beautiful era. The trade activities sustained to some level for two more years when the remarkable route was finally shut. Also as a consequence of 1962 war involving India and China, the other trade relations via Leh and Tibet were also closed. The efforts and contribution towards the Silk Route needs to be appreciated by the name of a renowned British explorer and Army officer, Sir Francis Edward Younghusband who started a successful operation to capture Lhasa via Nathu La pass in 1904. There are number of locations that are untapped and can be marketed as finest tourism destinations, consisting the complete natural as well as the cultural assets for attracting tourists as the procedure of negligence towards all these

destinations the central Asian trade links with India through Jammu and Kashmir towards Sikkim and other induced destinations has lost their identity.

1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Changing scenario and emerging trends have also affected the tourist choice. If we consider the quality and quantity, customers tries to attain qualitative experiences either in tangible products or intangible products and of course they become or had became more concerned about brands. In extension to this Blackadder (2006) from the psychological point of view has added that individual purchases brands with the intension of inner fulfillment and happiness and that makes their selection process much easier. And so is in the case of Tourism products and brands as it relies on the amalgamation of destination resources that together creates an impact among tourists' choices. Therefore, when the indigenous people have the ability to appreciate the interpretive and management of living traditional routes, it also enhances the experience of visitors in both tangible and intangible aspects (Chairatudomkul, 2008) and so is one of the requirement of Silk Route that needs to be understood at the tourism front in a more comprehensive manner. Also deriving and elaborating the concept of tourism along a route i.e. "Route Tourism", Briedenhann and Wickens (2004), ECI Africa (2006) and Lourens (2006) added that route tourism is popular internationally and locally as the collective marketing products linked by a route as a single tourism destination, has been found to encourage sustainability for tourism development.

UNESCO sent an expert mission in August, 2003 and July, 2004 sponsored by the Netherlands Funds-in-Trust at World Heritage Centre, to the Chinese division of the Silk Roads for the purpose of examine and understanding of Cultural Routes, with a vision to its potential nomination and inclusion in the World Heritage List. Creating brand can help to insert a positive identity and illustration of a destination that links tourists to it sensitively (Cai, 2002; Gnoth et al., 2007). Developing tourism along the Silk Route stands on an idea to put collectively a range of activities and tourism assets under an integrated theme and hence encouraging industrial prospect with the growth of auxiliary products and related services (Greffé, 1994). As an addition to the same initiative, 6th UNWTO International Meeting on Silk Road Tourism focused towards increasing concentration in developing cultural routes related with the Silk Route and succeeded to elevate the profile of tourism across this exemplary route (UNWTO, 2013).

In addition to improving the, socio-cultural, economic as well as environmental sustenance of the communities along this contemporary route, tourism can also be utilized to reveal the national identity of such previously lesser known destinations (Harrison, 2001).

Tourism is one of the most imperative indicators of fiscal vitality with a lot of segments it has effected on directly or indirectly (Aksoy and Kıcı, 2011). According to UNWTO (2014) business interest in the Silk Route region has increased significantly over several years, through chronological associations between European region, the Middle East and Asia that is being revived and revitalized. Such estimation stands true particularly for the Asian section of the Silk Route, an area domicile of a large number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites which has witnessed about 248 million of international tourist in 2013 only (UNWTO, 2014). The concept of ancient Silk Road still may provide a set of multifaceted channels in which the countries can more strongly bound together. And thus may provide a provision in which the civilizations, arts and knowledge, the pieties and values, the worldviews and processes of logic may get betrothed each other like goods.

As investment and trade are yet once again transacts swiftly among Asia and other regions of the world, a contemporary or restored “Silk Road” is required to support Asia attain its required potential (Bhattacharyay and De, 2009). If we consider the UNWTO’s effort towards Silk Route restoration, the record is much more appreciable with the coverage of Armenia, Azerbaijan, China, DPR Korea, Egypt, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Israel, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, Italy, Japan, Russian Federation, Ukraine, Turkey and Uzbekistan. And on putting a deeper insight to the defined list, India has still a place as it has remained significant part to the Silk Route connectivity.

Since records and much more information on the Silk Road represents abundant support prospects of tourism, but the requirement is the defining a vision and proper strategy significant to channelize its demand among tourists, with rearranging the available information and suggestions for an idea to support the research of a developmental consecutive nomination: a planned recommendation of a succession of groups associated by and representing the Silk Route (Feng, 2005). Such a concept initiates the enhancement of destination marketing by offering prospective tourists with

sufficient information before their visitation which further let them to recognize a destination, distinguish it from other contenders, and construct outlook regarding the possible holiday experience presented by the destination (Murphy et al., 2007).

Nevertheless it is a point to remember that its tourism potential has not been counted or estimated in provision with Silk Route relations rather they are famous as Buddhist destinations among the tourists. Yet the destinations are known to the tourism world as Buddhist circuit but their significance and origin is still an undefined part to the travel industry and thus needs a strategic destination brand approach. Same is applicable to the other destinations of the Indian Silk Route like Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi and Sikkim that are contributing to the tourism economy but the induced destinations of present states have not been highlighted to the tourism standards as Silk Route destinations.

In few cases, newer destinations that are incapable to attract adequate number of tourists frequently struggle to sustain among well developed or remarkable (i.e. well-branded) destinations (Urry, 2002). Further it has been revealed that branding plays a diagnostic role in determining the degree of visitation to any secluded site (Weiler and Seidl, 2004; Morgan, 2006; Fredman, et al., 2007). If managed conscientiously, tourism can be a driver for restoration of historical perspective of Silk Route destinations in more innovative form and thus may drive sustainable destination development. Latest studies in Asia depicted that the nations with geographical variations could potentially attain benefit from higher trade, only if infrastructure and business costs are enhanced (Bhattacharyay, and De, 2009; De 2008a and 2008b; Brooks, 2008; Brooks and Hummels, 2009). According to Kotler and Gertner (2004), branding destinations' style itself is strategic place marketing. It focuses practical image management in context to improving a destination's situation by:

- Knowing the environmental forces that influence its marketability;
- Examining the exterior atmosphere related to prospects and threats;
- Adding all related stakeholders together with administration, communities and industry to create a common image;
- Creating and offering enticement and organizing the factors that could influence purchase decision inclusive of image, assets, infrastructure and community. (Kotler and Gertner, 2004).

In reference to the above given statement the factual study could be assumed as that there is a need to understand the various factors/forces as environmental, cultural or various other transitional forces that affects the marketing policy and practices of Silk Route. Secondly, to understand and monitor the various opportunities and threats that is involved in developing such concept. Thirdly, the involvement of stakeholders as well as the community needs to increase the involvement of businessmen towards such destination as Silk Route.

According to UNWTO's long-term forecasts (2014) on the performance of particular provinces, the Asian market will be rising at approximate 5% each year and further may achieve 535 million (approximately) of international tourist arrivals by 2030. On the whole the international market share will rise to 30%, strengthening the image of tourism sector for the province in context to financial steadiness, sustainable escalation and comprehensive improvement. Creation of Silk Route as a destination brand could possibly open up new markets and economic opportunities for the landlocked countries or destinations. However, incorporating all the activities and destination resources into an integrated route can stimulate the collaboration & partnership among communities and can work like a technique for fiscal expansion in trivial regions, both in the developing and developed world (Meyer, 2004). One of the difficulties, however, is to identify the customer and information sources to communicate and increase awareness about Silk Route significance in present scenario.

In tourism prospect the Silk Route elaborates a picturesque view of history in the form virtual museum and an encyclopedia of cultural transformation among India and Central Asia straddling an era of about two thousand years. It was tempted cultural vestiges of the Silk Route have fascinated many explorers and hence made them to explore its heritage in the twentieth century. To realize the prospective of vibrant complementarities associated with the emerging theories of development of Silk Route at present requires developing different types of service links. However, destinations offer a blend of tourism assets including products and services which can be utilized under a brand name of a destination (Buhalis, 2000). Initiating a shared approach for the Silk Road corridors development may help to:

- Retain a sustainable approach to Silk Route destination management
- Increase the tourism dispersal across the region

- Open up the investment opportunities in the region and intact destinations.
- To improve the national, regional as well as international relations.

According to authorities and official sources conceptually up gradation of maritime connectivity between India and Pacific and expanding it to East Africa and further on to Mediterranean which is in tune with India could offer a broader maritime economic vision (Sahgal, 2014). However it is the lack of transparency that raises questions about on “how and what” the countries like India is going to represent in lieu of Silk Route.

Brand means that a destination is recognized and thus easier to advertise as a tourism product (Krajinović et al., 2013). But the present Silk Route is not found to have been preserved in its perfect form, however the intangible heritage, such as the features of sustaining tribes surrounding the route and the minority tribes, their figures, the genes, languages, cultural properties, clothing, lifestyles, agricultural techniques, city organization, architectural modes, customs, traditions, political structure, beliefs, skills, commerce, arts, music, etc., are still continuing distinctly (Sugio, 2002). So if developed as a tourism destination brand, Silk Route may provide an opportunity to tourists to visit different destinations and to get an au fait with their ethnicity and contemporary life therefore attaining a lot more information and imitation than through a conventional trip.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will present the theory of destination branding, brand awareness, destination perception and communication in context to tourists, Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) and stakeholders. Given that branding of a destination is rather a new concept and presently is not much research is available, the introduction to branding and how the branding can be applied to route as a complex destination product has been presented in general. Throughout the review of literature, the required perspective is analyzed and updated reports and articles on concerned issue is reviewed, as well as the relation between destination branding and route concept in general, the involvement of the DMOs and the process of strategic destination branding is discussed.

Beyond research efforts predominantly conducted on destination branding, significant efforts in the current study categorically emerges from the efforts of top academicians in the field of branding like Doyle (1990), Aaker (1996), Davis et al. (2002), Keller (2008) and Giannopoulos et al. (2011), with analytical focus on creation of a brand, the improvement and management of strong brands exclusive of direct implication of the destination's tourism perspective. Through the first part, tourism definitions as commonly used theory in context to route will be presented. Further, the theory of destination branding is discussed and various aspects of route as destination categorization are given. Subsequently, the phenomenon defining branding destination's elements have been given to enhance the clarity on the subject matter. The branding of destinations is a central point of literature analysis and an in-depth evaluation has also been carried out on available theory, destination branding procedure, how the branding links with aligned destinations across route as a solitary tourism product, the destination's image, awareness, identity creation and management.

2.1 RESEARCH APPLICATION

A region symbolizes a well-designed and physical unit which requires development and identity creation through branding and other marketing and development activities (Krajnovic et al., 2013). The significance of tourism & the emergence of numerous and latest destinations in the market have strained all other

destinations to pursue and participate in a competitive process at a universal level (Riege et al., 2001). In contrast to this, destination development has been recognized as an area where marketers promote places for tourists and relationships and where the stakeholder involvement is considered as common theme for marketing (Jernsand, 2014).

It is generally accredited that tourism destinations should be incorporated in the tourists' curiosity perspective from where an exclusive decision is finalized (Dana and McClearly, 1995; Leisen, 2001; Cai, et al., 2004; Tasci and Kozak, 2006). Changes in tourism sector, the competition among the resources and destinations and all of the expectations of tourists as well as variations in their habits results in considering a tourist destination as a brand that needs the concerned destinations to be administered with a strategic view point (Aksoy and Kiyci, 2011). The essence of tourism across routes is that they themselves form an important aspect as a product (Meyer, 2004). Generating a unique image has laid a foundation for destination sustenance in an international competitive environment where different destinations intensely compete with each other (Qu et al., 2011). This intense global competition in the tourism sector has pushed the destination authorities to create strong, exclusive and competitive destination brands (Hassan et al., 2010). For the purpose of promoting the destinations to its potential and prospective target groups (Soroka and Lominadze, 2011), marketers contribute a greater amount of concern to define the destination as a brand (Braun, 2008).

Using the same terminology of branding and tourism development along Silk Route in developing countries like India, may prove to be an integrative effort towards the destination(s) development but there is a need for motivating visitors along with generating markets and awareness of tourism routes and also to analyze whether visitors rate touring routes as attractive assets by their individual consent or just as a source for arriving at final destination (Meyer, 2004; Donaldson, 2007). Brands have always been seen with an association for clear image, and promotional elements utilized by marketers of a destination to attain competitive and unique benefits (Seaton and Bennett, 1996; Morgan and Pritchard, 2002; Saraniemi and Ahonen, 2008). Further McGhie (2012) has defined strategy operationalization as an additional stage for activating brand internally and in existing marketing, however branding is a vital process as it incorporates almost all strategic fundamentals that hooked into single success theory (Aaker, 1996). Additionally, academicians and experts provide a general agreement that branding of destinations is

aligned with much similar methods like consumer services and goods (like Anholt, 2002; Kotler and Gertner, 2002; Olins, 2002; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002). Similarly a route can be offered as a definition to a region, a subject that moves beyond geographical miscellany and a distance that could serve not only spatially and exclusive but also as an integrated marketable subject (Meyer, 2004). More interestingly Silk Route itself represents a spatial destination network and marketable theme. And in particular to this Morrison et al. (2004) defined tourism networks as complex structures; hitherto there is relatively less research work on tourism networks. Above all this there is a need to understand the theory of tourism along route, branding it as a complete destination and further its linkage to development of its incorporated destinations.

2.2 LINKING ROUTE AND TOURISM CONCEPT

A large number of tourists do not directly travel to their targeted destination and then return their native place again, rather they travel through completely planned or less planned route (Tideswell and Faulkner, 2002). Moreover, emerging tourism trends have modified the choices of tourists from usual mass tourism into extra distinctive model in which more meaningful experiences and superior flexibility have attained priority. According to ECI Africa (2006) routes attracts “to large and diversified type travelers especially overnight international tourists who travel along a route as an element of their unique interest for vacations and staying travelers who regularly take the particular route (or part of it) for day excursions or day travel”. This gives a prospect to attain financial system and scope rather than degree by serving a diverse range of tourism products and assets to motivate tourists from different niche markets and so to increase the expenditure conducted in the society (Greffé, 1994). Meyer (2004) has added that the routes are commenced with single or further added subsequent objectives taken in consideration:

- To disperse tourists and revenue generated from tourism activities;
- To put lesser-known places and related assets into tourism business/products;
- To enhance the demand of a destination in general;
- To boost tourists' spending and their length of stay;
- To motivate new travelers and repeat visitors; and
- To enhance sustenance destination or tourism product.

2.3 SERVING ROUTE AS A COMPLETE PRODUCT: CONSTRUCT FOR DESTINATION BRANDING

Functions of a product are supposed to be more tangible like some features in products, despite of the fact that if they are branded or not (Gras, 2009). Development of a tourism along a route which is generally regarded as a source for tourism development, is in fact the expansion of an ultimate experience and a product which can be offered to the final customer (McLaren, 2011). However Pike (2004) has defined the term “Brand” as the foundation for marketing; prosperity of western countries had made the branding more complex.

However destination branding is not new and has continuously been explored and discussed since 90s (Yusof et al., 2014). In this regard, nations and regional areas are still taking their role in tourist destinations in more serious manner, committing all possible efforts and finances for improving their destination’s attractiveness and image tourists (Hsu, et al., 2004; Sumaco and Richardson, 2011).

Further Buhalis in the year 2000 has explained a destination brand as a defined geographical area which is acknowledged as an exclusive entity by its tourists, intact with a governmental and political structure for marketing and planning of tourism. Branding a tourism destination is a process of elaborating the specialties of an environment and helps in the implementation of the tourist facilities which are finally presented to tourists (Ivanović and Milicević, 2009). By branding a destination successfully, one can observe the development of a destination into an identifiable brand in the sight and perceptual concept of the world (Temporal, n.d.). The branding process also entails planning, communicating and crafting the characteristics and the name as an endeavor for creating or managing the status of a brand on the basis of four different fundamentals i.e. image, identity, purpose and brand equity (Anholt, 2007). In tourism, branding destinations proposes itself as ‘strategic place marketing that elaborates proactive image management in terms of improving position of a destination by:

- Defining environmental elements that influence its marketability;
- Examining the peripheral environment in association to prospects and coercion;
- Including all related stakeholders counting with government, local communities and industrialists to extend a common image;

- Setting and distributing incentives and organizing the factors that may have an impact on purchase decisions like people, perception, attractions and infrastructure (Kotler and Gertner, 2004).

However, the notion of branding has recently started to expand its structure into tourism research (Ricardo, 2009). Destination Branding has been considered and defined as combination of a philosophy and its implementation by Tan in 2008. It is all about giving cautious attention to specify what a destination should induced in tourists' mentality, deciding on suitable characteristics to put further and utilizing the suitable communication method so as to ensure for finding the right people as proficiently and convincingly as possible (Tan, 2008).

In 1998, Brent and Brent in a report entitled "The branding of tourism destinations" for the Annual Congress of the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism has explained destination branding as a sign, title, symbol ,tagline or other details that together differentiates and categorize the destination brand; furthermore, it fulfills the consent of a remarkable travel experience which is entirely related to a particular destination and also serves to combine & highlight the collection of satisfying memories about a destination experience.

A destination brand is also similar with that of other consumer products and brands that present customers with numerous offerings and benefit to prospective tourists with information before visitation, that makes them to recognize a destination, distinguish it from its contenders and induce prospects for viable experience for vacations presented by a destination (Murphy et. al., 2007; Gras, 2009). Additionally, a destination brand is also supposed to become a producer of revenue from outfits or clothing and memorabilia trade, which may sometime, create an issue of logo rights and authenticity (Zou, 2007).

According to Cai (2002), brands are all about perceptions of a place as replicated by the links made in tourists' memory. On the other hand, Blain et al. (2005) elaborated the destination branding as "a bunch of activities of marketing which (1) sustain the establishment of a title, icon, tagline, mark, logo or other graphical items that enthusiastically recognize & distinguish a place; that (2) constantly communicate the prospects of an exclusive experience of a travel which is particularly linked with a

destination; that (3) supply to strengthen & emphasize various emotional links among tourists & a destination; and that (4) lessen customer search expenses and perceived risk". However, the major challenge for marketers is to make certain that the consumers have a true kind of experience by the usage of a product and services and to market it in through an exact process to create the required images, thoughts, feelings, perceptions, beliefs and opinions associated with the brand (Keller, 2001).

Providing a futuristic approach towards importance of destination brand, Morgan and Pritchard (2001) has added that, in future the battle for clientele in tourism business will not be for cost, but for the customers' empathy and psyche – in real meaning, the branding (...) will be the answer to success. Branding aspires to increase awareness and construct positive perceptions which ultimately initiate purchase intentions (Henderson, 2007). In short, branding intends to fill the gap existed between the real and perceived destination image (Atanassova, 2011).

Further, in present market-oriented society, a firm brand provides majorly two objectives i.e. to develop a strategic system for brand composition through the chaotic business place and achieve the interest of potential buyers and generate emotional acquaintance with them, which further distinguishes products/services so as to achieve a certain target market (Dos Santos and Campo, 2014). Similar to the general prospect on product brands, destination brands use two vital tasks: differentiation and recognition (Qu et al., 2011). While the basic brand proposition is important, communication is a key to create consumer awareness of brand values (Litteljohn, 2006).

Branding is intended to create "value", both for customers, and for the destination (Ivanović and Milicević, 2009). Consequently the values of constructing a destination brand are of same kind to those of broad industry branding: a brand generates business identity and insert value among consumer about the product or service by increasing fiscal asset, decreasing market communication outlays, and enlightening buyer loyalty (Keller and Lehmann, 2006). Whereas the benefit of brands over products is that they considerably become sustainable assets, their value get retained through cautious marketing (Morgan, 2004).

The ultimate purpose of branding a destination is to generate and improve a value or equity for a longer period and the similar has been termed as a significant motive of

destination branding process (Pak, 2013). Pike in 2005 has added that for most of the destinations, slogan is essential for open communication regarding brand positioning strategy of a destination. In fact, through the brand practices of destinations are broadly using names, taglines and logos to distinguish themselves from their challengers and to motivate tourists (Antonsen, 2010).

Anholt (2004) and Kerr (2006) have defined branding with regards of a place as a source for executing a brand strategy and supplementary practices for marketing & policy for socio-economic, cultural and political growth of various cities, nations and regions. Further Clarke (2000) in his research has summarized six benefit points of branding associated with tourism destination products:

1. as tourism involves classically a large participation, destination branding facilitates choice reduction,
2. branding assists in overcoming the effect of intangibility,
3. it communicates uniformity allover numerous outlets and during time,
4. branding helps to diminish the dimensions associated with risk that further leads to choice creation about vacations,
5. it helps to specify segmentation, and
6. facilitates in generating an idea for assimilation of producer's effort, assisting community to work for a similar effect.

The benefit of a branding a destination is not only for motivating tourists but also for import venturing, employment generation and further settlements (Fan, 2006). Tourist destination branding is a procedure in lieu of which a destination vigorously move forward to create a unique and viable identity to site itself, as best as possible on the native and international market, as a popular tourist destination and an area of promising economic development (Krajnović et al., 2013).

Destination branding is about merging all the elements related to the place like its physical assets and amenities from diverse sectors like transport, agriculture, arts, sports, technology, investment, education, etc. under single notion, which further convey a unique identity and quality of a destination and distinguishes it from its opposition (Rizvi and Ahmad, 2012). The identity of the destination, acts as a base for creating a

sustainable and accountable tourist destination and it is possible to adequately implement this through tourist facilities (Meža, and Šerić, 2014).

In short destination branding is a method of generating a unique identity or individuality for tourism destination (including investment) and communicating the same to tourists or potential investors using a name, logo, tagline, design or an amalgamation of all these for construction of positivity about brand image (Harish, 2010). In fact branding is supposed to be applied differently depending upon the nature of destination like whether it is a city, a province or a nation (Caldwell and Freire, 2004). Similarly in case of Silk Route which is in fact the combination of numerous destinations, a strategically defined branding approach is required.

Destinations that successfully implement their branding strategies and recognized the procedure for destination branding are supposed to be capable enough to assist in gap reduction that existed between perceptions of prospective tourists and destination's potency (Morgan et al., 2010). And in this context destination branding further requires going beyond the creation of attractive advertisements that can persuade awareness among consumers (Soroka and Lominadze, 2011). In fact branding has been considered as recursive procedure that spins about an axis created by brand element mix, brand identity and image building (Cai, 2002). In extension of this Mulec (2010) in his study has identified five key phases of destination brand building:

1. Brand Perception (Image investigation),
2. Its development (identity creation),
3. Design,
4. Launch and communication, and finally
5. Its overall management

2.3.1 *Brand Perception*

Perception performs its vital role for the decision-making practice of tourists. In tourism, perception is termed as a crucial concept because of the intangibility factor. In extension to this, terms like, “perception”, “impression” or “mental imagination” of a tourism destination are usually utilized to give theoretical approach to destination image in tourism study (Martí'n and Bosque, 2008). Tasci and Gartner (2007) have identified it as a significant characteristic in flourishing tourism and destination marketing because of

its impact on both demand and supply. Turkish Language Association (2008) has defined image or perception as a thing which is premeditated in a psyche & required to be understood, interpret and feel. The organic or a pre-visit illustration about a destination held by potential tourists considerably influence tourists' behavior, reactions and decision-making procedure regarding a destination visit (Castañeda et al., 2007). It is basically tourists' view point about a place which involves their ideas, opinions and impressions (İlba, et al., 2008).

The gap of perception and reality has also been a factor for the tourism marketing and branding aspects. This may lead to rethink about the image of destination among tourists so as to increase the tourist influx. This is one of the reasons that the term destination perception appeared as one of the fundamental concern in tourism business. Nowadays, marketers are profoundly emphasizing the importance of creating a positive image when promoting their destination, as the role of the image concept is highlighted in present growing international tourism marketing and by the competition between destinations (Konecnik, 2005) thus creating an impact on destination choice making decisions. Thus a positive destination brand establishes the destination as a place worth visiting (Morgan et al., 2010).

Significance of destination perception should not be constrained to already acknowledging a destination but may also be extended towards underdeveloped and lesser known destinations. It is recognizable that an image of a destination among tourists as familiar or new also influences his or her intentions to visit a particular destination and also his/her behavior during whole of the trip (Chalip et al., 2003). While determining the conceptual framework for branding, perception about a destination should be considered as a pre-existing theory related to a destination branding (Pike, 2009). In fact, it is one of the major construct which establishes the destination's future (Aksoy and Kiyci, 2011).

Discussing the study of Etchner and Ritchie (1993), Zahra (2012) has defined three components namely attribute-holistic, functional-psychological and common-unique characteristics of destination image:

Attribute or Holistic: Attribute is the portion of processed knowledge held by the customers which is further preserved in their psyche concerning any destination product.

This may include environment, lodging, friendliness of the community of the host destination etc. Whereas holistic is consist of mental illustrations of a destination.

Functional or psychological: Functional sections include all those features of a country which are visible & quantifiable like poor infrastructure and low charges, etc; whereas psychological section includes intangible assets and are difficult to quantify e.g. environment or frame of a destination.

Common or unique: Common elements include assets shared by most of the destinations. And unique consists of those characteristics which differentiate a destination from other with similar options.

Considering the above given perspectives of a tourist destination, it is viable to define its image with the usage or construction of taglines, logos or inscriptions which comprises every kind of information regarding facilities that could attract tourists' to the particular nation or region, thus creating a picture in people's mentality. In other words, perception is an outlook or a picture that motivates the tourists towards a country and makes them to spend there (Şahbaz, 2008).

It is a reality that community have diverse attitudes towards a similar product and examining such variances in their perception for diverse cultures and regions is absolutely imperative for acknowledging the image held by them especially about the associated destination and in selecting a precise tag and adjectives for the targeted market (Prebensen, 2007). Therefore, the image plays an arbitrating function among the unique, cognitive and affective brand relations and behavioral intentions (Maumbe and Unlimited, n.d.). Whereas according to Lopes (2011):

- There might be significant differentiations between veracity and perception in relation to a brand in the marketplace and these differentiations may be revealed negatively or positively in the image of a brand.
- A gap may exist between the preferred image of a brand and its available information, which may further deject the reliability of the strategies adopted by a company. This may be a counted as a negative end for business services, where experts who get in touch with consumers initiate directly to the creation of image of company's brand, and ultimately turn

into representatives for the brand thus necessitate internal marketing practices.

Beneficial representation, impression or perception about a destination apprehended by tourists is associated with some anticipated benefits and utilization values (Sumaco and Richardson, 2011). So, brand perception of a destination among tourists requires contemplating the examination so as to make it sustained in the market and attain a considerable place among other opponent destinations.

Image investigation of a destination relies with the concept that basic values of a destination brand should be created which are significant, sustainable, significant and communicable (Morgan et al., 2010). Producing a destination brand which replicates some unique characteristics of a destination or place can be valuable for applying rational strategies with a view to maintain such assets, image and status (Pike, 2004).

Sonneitner (2011) in her study has added that the mere existence of an image in people psychology is not sufficient rather it should represent the actual features of a place. On the other hand, the destination image may further be derived to elaborate pre and post image investigation among tourists. Briefly destination image or perception is an aspect of beliefs, impressions and views carried by tourists about a destination (Avcıkt, 2004).

According to Gallarza, et al. (2002) image always depicts about creation of perceptions and every individual differs in his/her perceptions. So the pre visit image may vary from the information served to and perceived by tourists and post visit image stands dependent upon the facilities and experiences perceived and actually availed by tourists. At the same time cognitive image assessment is referred to as beliefs and knowledge about a destination (Sonneitner, 2011) and emotional image is the concept developed by tourists in concern with feelings and attachment in particular to that destination(s).

The previous studies in the similar field focused to identify a variety of perceptions about tourism development from negative to positive impacts (Belisle and Hoy, 1980; Var, 1986; Liu, et al., 1987; Perdue, et al., 1987; Ross, 1992). According to Kim (2002), at the beginning of product or destination brand life cycle, residents and community perceives positive benefits or impacts of tourism development and if the perception about a destination is positive, the brand is considered more efficient in the

marketplace (Lim and Weaver, 2014). All these aspects may further need to be considered while creating a new destination brand or rebranding of an already existing brand in the market as such complexity in image depicts an overall positive or negative assessment about a destination and its related products in consideration (Beerli and Martín, 2004).

2.3.2 *Brand Development*

Before being able to brand a place and position this brand, the place must define its identity, its attributes and its improvement areas (Rainisto, 2003). In relation to this, Pike (2012) defined the importance of three interrelated component in destination process added that the first and basic component entitled as brand identity represents the destination image expected by the brand owners and their strategists. In short, identity is an explanation of an idea held by every individual about themselves that further addresses two senses i.e. who they are? and how should they act? (Alvesson et al., 2008). For branding a particular destination, the sender or destination marketer highlights an identity of a destination brand with the help of all the characteristics and activities that make a distinction to the destination from other competitive destinations (Qu et al., 2011). However, the image building procedure is just a step involved in the destination branding system and brand identity serves as a link between these two phases (Cai, 2002). It also provides brand features and its valuable characteristics inclusive of figurative, pragmatic, emotional and public values (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2006). In fact, a distinctive brand identity enables the customers to fulfill their psychic need of being considered as unique (Tian et al., 2001; Berger and Heath, 2007; Shirazi et al., 2013).

Brand identity is shaped by the destination marketers with the support of touristic attractions, related history and people (Cretu, 2011). Further Aaker (2010) elaborated it as an exclusive bunch of brand; links that a brand strategist aspires to maintain and craft. It reflects on contribution of all the brand's elements for creating brand awareness and image (Keller, 1998; Cretu, 2011). Hankinson (2007) elaborated the significance of perceptions generated by tourists, which due our atmosphere are often becoming more multifaceted than the understanding we derive for them. Since the identification of a brand involves emotional affection with the brands, customers needs to be identified more efficiently so that they assess the worth of their spending on a focal brand as desired (Shirazi et al., 2013). A sensitive concern of the destination marketing is characterized by

the reality that the brand's identity should remain steady, whilst the destination image tends to change over time because of outside/intentional factors or must be improved with the due course of time— with effect from interior/individual dimensions (Mazurek, 2008 cited in Stăncioiu et al., 2011).

For the requirement of constructing a strong and successful brand, brand identity is considered highly important and desirable (Geuens et al., 2009) especially in terms destination branding where intangibility factor prevails. When destination identity reinforces the customer attention, it significantly attains a relationship to visitation intention thus providing a futuristic approach. So, to become sustainable and successful, a brand needs to be loyal towards its identity (Antonsen, 2010) as it induces recognition, strengthens differentiation and makes immense thoughts and meanings accessible (Wheeler, 2009). Consequently, prior to communicating a destination to the defined population, there emerges a necessity of adoption of vital approach by the destination organization(s) so as to understand:

- What exactly they want to communicate?
- How tourist will perceive it? And
- What would be the appropriate source for communication?

Of particular side, is the recognition of the need for research that identifies tourism resources, the significance of association and clustering of tourism products and services, and raising awareness, interests, and understanding of the potential value of tourism along Silk Route. And to this process, brand development involves solicitous, accountable commitment to enduring distinctiveness of a destination (Mendiratta, 2014). In extension to all this, Kapferer (2004) provided a theoretical model concerning identity development of a brand. This model forms a prism of six components of identity which included shape (structure), individuality (differentiation remark), correlations (service delivery), customs, expressions (value dimensions), and opinionated image (actual experience).

Physique implies to the tangible characteristics and specialties of the offered brand. And in terms of destinations physique stands for all tangible features, facilities and attraction including environmental conditions.

The *personality* represents the basic traits a brand may contain to create a differentiation as well as recognition in the market. Brand personality is defined and considered in relation to human personality significant for brands. Taking the concept to the destinations competition destination personality persists towards tourists' perception generation thus creates inimitable destination identity. However, this terminology has further been considered as a combination of some particular characteristics associated with a destination (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006).

Relationship aspect has been described by Kapferer (2004) as an approach of performance that mostly depicts the brand and has propositions for brand performance, service applications and customer relations. However, in terms of destination as a brand relationship trait refers to the systematic service delivery to the tourists on visiting a destination.

Culture defines the combination of values which complements a brand's motivation. It acts as a significant trait that differentiates brands, and in regards to culture has been defined as a quality that helps in differentiating the destination and sets the level of competition among various destinations.

Reflection stands for the brand's consumer indication. It reflects upon targeting the desired as well as potential buyer. In terms of tourism, this perspective reflects the type of visitors to a destination. So, all brands should organize and direct their customer reflection as they use brands to create or reflect their own identity (Kapferer, 2004).

Self-image stands for the customer's experience while using a brand. And in tourism terminology it refers to tourists while visiting the destination. While using a brand, the buyers, or tourists, develop a particular attitude and an inner relationship with particular brands; however the choice of destination may differ depending tourists' age, social status, etc.

Blian et al. (2005) has identified logos as a critical component of destination brand identity and image as they play an important role in crafting a readily recognizable and unique image for distinguishing the product, service, or organization that requires or utilizes successful visual attraction (Henderson et al., 2003). Concisely, brand identity of a destination communicates about what actually the brand owners wish for and how a destination should be perceived (Yusof et al., 2014). Thus, a brand having well-built

identity is fervent to satisfy figurative requirements of a customer, a lot more than relevant ones and this is why a brand with a stronger identity is believed to develop and recover perceived value among consumers (Shirazi et al., 2013).

In terms of tourism, a destination brand represents the basic essence of a destination. On providing a linkage between branding and design, Mozota (2006) explained it as a link in the chain of a brand or a source of expressing values of a brand to its various products. In other words, designing a destination brand provides a framework for branding, marketing and development of a destination (Cooper and Hall, 2008).

Design is a source for tangibilization of the exterior factors that persuade the individual's perception about travel experiences, with special consideration on the stimuli of senses like audio, visual, tactile etc. (Bitner, 1992; Heide and GrØnhaug, 2006; Agapito et al., 2013). In fact, whole of the method for designing a strong brand and promoting positive and excellent travel experience includes vital actions pertaining to destinations which together make a destination more competitive tourism product in the market (Agapito and Lacerda, 2014).

Designing and formulation of product should be based on proper research (Calantone and Mazanec, 1991; Hu and Ritchie, 1993; Baker et al., 1994; Ritchie, 1996; Buhalis, 2000). As innovative organizations have recognized that the formatted designing of process lays the foundation to success of a new service and in lieu of this they have started to search upstream to consumer review or research to improve or remove the negativity for attaining a consecutive remark as a winner in the marketplace (Serra and Vieira, 2008). So along with understanding the requirements of a product offering, designers need to identify the means to shift into the shared memory of people, their traditions, conduct, and behaviors, to know their backgrounds, requirements and ideas and also recognize the ethnicity and conducts of indulged institutes along with the needs of their products or services (Lacerda, 2004). Though intricacy of destinations as tourism products hampers the exploration or discovery of a destination but there are different tools and techniques relevant for attaining overview of both the offered product and the available consumers (Stickdorn and Zehrer, 2009).

2.3.3 *Brand Communication*

Being occupied with the factor of intangibility, brand communication serves as an important factor to conceive the services available at the destination(s) so as to attract the tourists and to make them to purchase/visit a destination. Communication often is referred to as a significant factor for successful introduction of a new service (Grace and O'cass, 2005). In common, brands have stressed upon external communication to an acknowledged target consumer market (Ind, 1997). Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) has further elaborated it as an attempt to communicate the identity and during the product development process, a classically designed communication is applied as a significant factor by marketers who select various communication sources to disperse brand information (Dos Santos and Campo, 2014). Thus, the communication should be directed internally as well as externally (Ind, 1997; de Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2001).

It is important that the brand name should be documented for a more proactive role it plays in communicating a brand, instead of merely being considered as an element of a brand (Grace and O' cass, 2005). And for this requirement it is also essential that the brand value should be conveyed perfectly and consistently to people at all levels in the organization in order for them to be communicated to external stakeholders (Knox and Bickerton, 2003). However, communications cannot substitute change, but can help to report it, consolidate it, and to some extent speed it on its way (Anholt, 2006).

According to Kolb (2006) product or service branding is a process of preparing a slogan that collectively communicates products and service image with a logo or symbol to the consumers along with its characteristics, values and benefits. Further Atanassova (2011) in his study, added that brand is not just a logo, slogan, a product or a simple marketing campaign rather it is a compilation of all these elements and has been considered as essential building block from which all marketing communications and behavior should flow (Munjoma, 2012)

Anholt (2007) and Bierzynski (2011) explained the significance of preparing an accurate message for the true audience with the help of a most effective communication technique. Slogans play an effective role in communicating and inducing the brand image thus augmenting brand equity (Plog, 2004). Whereas logos as a source for destination marketing and image communication helps to derive out the confusions for attaining consideration and fast identification of a company or product (Henderson and Cote, 1998; Gras, 2009). In fact tourism brands are classically an outcome of a planned endeavor to

communicate a destination's unique selling proposition to prospective tourists (Chandler, 2014).

Nowadays, communication cites for two things; first is sending out messages and second is making sure they get properly received (Bak, 2009). So, when a marketer focuses on destination branding, they design symbols, names, taglines etc. to communicate their brand to potential customers (Rungø and Ulbæk, 2011). It is also suggested that for increasing the awareness of a brand, the slogans should be linked to the name and meaning of that particular slogan to increase its chances of being remembered (Cretu, 2011) as they are claimed to be the most effective way of gaining target audience's attention, comparing to other communication tools (Brierley, 2002). These communication tools are made to distinguish a country in the minds of their potential tourists as a country that has convinced character, personality and identity (Wulandri, n.d.). Further Kavaratzis (2007) defined a structure which illustrated the system through which brand communication occurs with consideration of the alternatives and suitable management of diverse variables, which further may have both practical as well as representative significance.

2.3.4 *Brand Management*

According to Park and Petrick (2006), destination branding strategies work only under certain conditions and hence need a proper management. The idea of brand management for various regions and countries has been recognized as one of the techniques for attaining a significant position at global level (Giannopoulos et al., 2011). In continuation to this it has also been analyzed that the destinations with positive perceptions and well defined images (among tourists) comprise of increased chances of being preferred by the tourists, thus inducing the requirement for proper management (Jesca et al., 2014). Brand management has been defined as an inherent method of managing and considering brands along with their values, dispersed by the associates of an organizational community and manifested by similar culture which further perceived as an organization's prevailing standards to determine its knowledge of brands, the process and substance of brand strategy, and consequently its prospective involvement in competitive benefits (Louro and Cunha, 2001). However, Quinlan (2008) added that, destination brand management involves a process whereby stakeholders decide on a strategic plan, the purpose of which is to identify the most appropriate brand architecture,

to change or modify brand equity mechanism such as brand awareness, value, relevance, qualities, emotional association and accessibility. Thus, the description of destination branding includes a phenomenon whose management and design requires a collaborative effort by all the stakeholders (Morgan et al., 2003).

Brand management requires organizational proficiency which should be understood and constantly developed in future (Moilanen, 2008). However an appropriate understanding and management of destination brand is critical in some areas especially where tourism is a major source of economic development (Hall and Higham, 2005; Bigano et al., 2007; Pike, 2009). Saraniemi and Ahonen (2008) proposed that by implementing corporate branding approach to destination branding and understanding a brand (as co-created) may assist DMOs to act in a strategic and proactive manner. Destination brand management involves a process whereby stakeholders decide on a strategic plan, purpose of which is to identify the most appropriate brand architecture to adopt, change or to improve various brand equity components like brand awareness, brand value, personality, emotional relationship and accessibility (Quinlan, 2008). It shapes the conduct of members of an organization for looking and managing brands their perception orientation, elucidation and assessment (Louro and Cunha, 2001).

Destination management operates on both micro and macro level and integration across these levels is critical if a destination is to function effectively (Page and Connell, 2006). And when the destinations are intact with a route, the management becomes more crucial. According to ECI Africa (2006), the management of routes and their marketing is usually done through private-sector associations related to tourism supported by local, regional or state authorities, depending on the level and importance of the route. The successful establishment of routes requires familiarity with the following aspects:

- Regional leadership dynamics;
- Tourism assets (mostly natural and cultural heritage);
- Carrying capacity of area and infrastructure necessities;
- Substantial framework;
- Market investigation;
- Establishment of local organizations;
- Promotion and explanation; and
- Tourism value norms (ECI Africa, 2006).

Destination management, harmonized with destination policy, forecasting, development, protection and cost in the grouping of qualifying dimensions, is sorted into management (Chan and Bauer, n.d.). Larger utilization of local products and produce are feasible through greater rural linkages and village tourism endeavor, only if proper policy fostering stakeholder participation, long-term management and control are executed (Smith, 2010). In fact, the creation and management of a destination brand are described with the requirement of collaborative effort by stakeholders (Morgan et al., 2002). Determining the branding concept in context to Silk Route will prove to be positive element for stakeholders and destination authorities to introduce such kind of a circuit into the market as an exclusive tourism brand, comprising a variety of assets for tourists (Manhas et al., 2014).

Several destinations are not-for-profits, are funded through private partnerships, and/or local investors, in fact most Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) serve as multiple masters (Chandler, 2014). Bregoli (2013) has analyzed the significance of linkages between stakeholder coordination and destination branding process and further recommended that more efforts to be taken by destination marketing organizations to promote the destination brand especially to the stakeholders so that the brand gets well adopted and applied in their businesses. In fact, it is the responsibility of the stakeholders to coordinate, plan and promote the destination (Page and Connell, 2006). Possession and legal protection have been identified as essential mechanism for a brand and also prerequisite construct for efficient brand management and brand equity (de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998; Marzano and Scott, 2005). Adding to this approach Hankinson (2009) divided managerial practice relevant for destination branding into five categories i.e. brand culture, coordination of organizations, control, brand communication and collaboration of stakeholders. Within the relational model, brand management is an ongoing, vibrant and dialectical procedure, exclusive of a clear beginning or end in which various units (customers and organizations) support conflicting notions (like brand image and brand identity) and further creates brand value and wisdom through the cooperation among stakeholder groups (Louro and Cunha, 2001; Hankinson, 2004; Moilanen, 2008).

Overall, tourism can be used as a source for facilitating collaboration regions and such efforts should be able to reduce the gaps and barriers in tourism development along the Silk Road and in this process of collaboration, the stakeholders' participation is

proved to be very essential (Chan and Bauer, n.d.). So, when defined this way, efforts for brand development and the challenge for its planning and implementation becomes evident (Meer, 2010).

2.3.5 *Brand Awareness*

In literature, the concept of brand awareness has widely been used as a factor for attaining knowledge about a brand (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; Hsu and Cai, 2009). This characterizes the potency and presence of a brand in the mentality of the customer, with the purpose not only to achieve general awareness but also to be in the memory for projected motives (Aaker, 1996a). A question arises here that if sufficient brand awareness is present, will it be considered in the purchase decision which further may form a link for embedding relations brand-specificity, familiarity and preference for brand among the customers (Esch, 2004; Didascalou et al., 2009). To this Boo et al. (2009) added that it is one of the major components of a brand which effect tourism and represents the strength of the brand's presence in the consumer's mind.

Destinations about which tourists are not aware of, referred to as unawareness set (Tasci and Kozak, 2006) and if a consumer is highly aware of a brand and is familiar with that particular brand and also holds some strong, positive and exclusive brand association, then there exists probability that he or she may purchase that particular brand (Atilgan, et al., 2005). In terms of tourism, awareness is not only about whether customers have knowledge about a destination, but also about the probability that the destination will emerge in a choice set of potential tourists (Crompton, 1992). Though, the brand awareness actively connects a brand and its appropriate purchase indications, it also induces a positive image through effective communication and promotion (UNWTO, 2007). In other words, brand awareness significantly affects decision-making process among consumers as they generally use it as decision heuristic (Gouveia et al., n.d.). Superior and extensive brand awareness means prospective tourists could imagine about a destination across a multiplicity of surroundings at any suitable time (Li et al., 2008). Keller (2008) has elaborated that consumer awareness and their aptitude to decide on a brand can be imitated from two different conditions of evaluation and consciousness i.e.:

1. Brand recall, which define the consumers' ability to remind a brand that must be fulfilled.

2. Brand recognition, which further refers consumers' ability to verify their earlier phase of that particular brand and has been considered as a clue.

This further can be called as an extensive theory provided by Morgan et al. (2002) who elaborated it as a unique blend of related values and product personality, both non-functional and functional and have attained relevant sense which is inextricably associated to the brand, its awareness which could be cognizant or perceptive.

According to Milman and Pizam (1995) customers have diverse images about the destination which passes through three different levels: unawareness, awareness and familiarity through experiments. However a well-known brand has a higher probability of being selected or preferred by customers over a lesser known or an unknown brand (Huang and Sarigöllü, 2012). So, it is important for a destination to have a good reputation which could increase its competitiveness and improve its economic, political and social dimensions (Anholt, 2009; Bačík, 2008). Furthermore Dowling has added that a visual identity such as logo helps to create awareness, recognition and brand perceptions in consumer's mind (Dowling cited in Warnaby and Medway 2010). Thus, the value of a brand is enhanced if it followed a process of definition of brand identity, identification of brand awareness, development of an effective communication plan close to stakeholders and then to consumers and of constant monitoring of brand image, brand awareness and brand value close to those actors (Gouveia et al., n.d.).

2.4 LITERATURE GAP

Tourism has been recognized as among the most capable sectors of development and economy growth at global level (Scheidegger, 2006) and the countries are looking to develop the tourism entities and assets as a corporate unit thus making it compulsory for the stakeholders to run it like a single entity – generating and developing with new products (Sisodia, 2011). Although Silk Route presents the same concept but very less literature is available on the Silk Route and its destinations especially in India that requires an in-depth discussion and volunteered approach. However, branding the Silk Route has been a part of discussion by UNWTO but a needful approach at the regional level needs a due consideration and discussion. The literature presents evidence that tourism is a viable option, but it was highlighted that all the routes are not successful as projects but are just simply supply-side driven because of very little consideration on their

marketing aspects (McLaren, 2011). Although the central built attraction of Silk Route is its intact destinations, with varied tourism resources as its core product, tourism services and facilities at the different destinations can provide competitive advantages.

However, Silk Route is not only about the connectivity but also about the destinations' development and integrity. Supporting the tourism development along the routes, Meyer (2004) has added that such methodology of merging the attraction or a number of resource providers into single regional packages not only helps in constructing better access to a variety of products but also helps in increasing the product's appeal thus serves as an important tourism development strategies. As investment and trade once again moving swiftly through Asia and other parts of the world, a modern and restored "Silk Road" is required for facilitating Asian region to retain its potentiality (Biswa and Prabir, 2009).

In support of this perspective, analysis of perception towards destination as a brand has been observed as prerequisite aspect so as to understand tourists' expectations from certain product or destination which further may help the authorities to create a more effective brand. In fact, the potency of routes in terms tourism of has long been recognized in the developed areas or regions (Meyer, 2004) whereas it is still at nascent stage in India and thus requires a strategic approach. However, Silk Route fulfils the basic criteria of being considered as a destination, a route as well as a network whereas the requirement is to make it recognizable to the tourists as well as DMOs. In fact, by joining numerous attractions and marketing them jointly, it is expected that number of tourists (domestic, international and repeat visitors) will increase, thus increasing their spending and length of stay a destination (Rogerson, 2007).

In short presenting the identity of Silk Route as a tourism assets may induce globalized conversion as it not only unites some linked destinations but also the nations with diverse consents (Manhas et al., 2014). All this requires a strategic approach to be adopted by the authorities to make the concept clearly known to the travel world which requires the enactment of tourism. This can only be done by making people aware of its significance, even if it is possible by taking the ideas from already developed route like Route 66 or Route of Africa (discussed in Chapter 4), where separate units/authorities are established for their development and who working towards the creation of brand awareness of such tourism products.

2.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

Critical literature review related to destination products and various routes in relation with destination branding and its significance in the decision-making process about holidays, gives a clue to the Silk Route renewal as a destination brand.

UNWTO and countries like India are still looking for the ways to refine the status of Silk Route and its induced destinations as an Approved Tourism Brand/Network. Such perspective will provide opportunities to Indian tourism operators to promote directly to international and national tourism consumers and a hope for Silk Route destination to open up and attain a major growth market. Promoting Silk Route as a long-haul international destination to potential tourists in India is crucial to Indian tourism industry. Simultaneously, Indian tour operators and tourism enterprises needs to promote their products and services in contrast to national as well as international market.

Some successful cases from the tourism sector depicted that the complex constructs of custom, nature and history should electively be utilized to generate and promote an exclusive destination image (Saarinen, 1997; Poimiroo, 2000; Ooi, 2001). Whereas lacking the access to information of Silk Route destination resulted in its degradation in the memory of tourists in India. It is a point of discussion that the image of Silk Route as a destination should be the representative of what exactly it is and what it potentially can offer. Moreover, it is also uncertain that the general population posses a clear image about Silk Route and its related destinations.

Describing the identity of some destinations is pointless because a huge number of aspects are involved in the process of destination brand research. So studying destination perception is necessary to compare the tourists' awareness and its impact with marketing position strategies and its resilience both for the academic field. The branding techniques like brand development and brand communication for the inscribed Indian destinations of Silk route like Gilgit, Kashmir, and Sikkim, etc., may contribute to the scenario of thinking and help the informants to form a variety of tourism businesses in the region. This would also help managers as well as stakeholders to adopt and implement proactive strategies.

In context to the requirement of an independent research, present study is designed to assess the awareness level of the tourists as well as stake holders about Silk Route, to the other hand; Archaeology Survey of India is already working on the concept of identification of such related sites.

Overall the research problem addresses the six research objectives:

1. To study the awareness of tourists and travel agents about Silk Route in India.
2. To study the perception of tourists as well as travel agents about Silk Route tourism.
3. To study the branding strategies for Silk Route as tourism brand in India.
4. To study the effect of brand communication on brand perception.
5. To study the relationship between the brand perception and brand development.
6. To suggest and recommend the various destination branding and communication strategies.

Further, to fulfill the above research objectives four research questions have been framed which formed the basis of the survey i.e.:

1. Are the tourists and travel agents at the induced destinations aware about Silk Route and its linkage in India?
2. What is perception of respondents towards silk route as a tourism brand in India?
3. Does respondents' perception towards Silk Route tourism as a brand affect brand development of Silk Route in India?
4. Is there any relationship between respondents' Perception (Brand) towards Silk Route tourism and Brand Communication?

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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Present chapter illustrates the problems associated with research during of the conduct of this study and elucidate a basic structure of the research. A thorough discussion about research propositions and hypotheses has been conducted. A description of the instrument used for data compilation and a discussion concerning the projection of questions related to the study is given. Data collection and methods used for statistical analyses are also discussed. The last segment focuses the concerns of reliability and validity of opted measurement scales.

The major objective of this study is to identify various factors for determining branding strategies for Silk Route. Branding a destination is quite an intricate concept to assess and hence, utilizing only one technique will not be sufficient. A realistic outlook has been adopted to evaluate the awareness and communication, perception and brand development of Silk route as a destination. Self structured questionnaire has been used to analyze the related aspects of the concerned topic.

3.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

Various studies revealed that more a place is branded more are the chance that the place is chosen in the market. Studying the level of awareness and perception among tourists gives the pathway to the branding strategies to be adopted while launching a new tourism product. In order to reduce the bias, quantitative approach has been adopted as it has formed a strategic aura in tourism areas that describes the reason and impact association in tourists' behavior (Echtner and Ritchie 1991, 1993; Han et al., 1997; Jenkins 1999; Prayag and Ryan, 2011). In fact various studies like Finn et al. (2000); Jennings (2001); Echtner and Ritchie (2003) and O'Leary and Deegan (2005) has also revealed that adopting quantitative methods helps in making statistical comparison between the study variables. A quantitative approach to branding of a destination reveals that it as an amalgamation of various elements and when it comes to the Silk route branding, the approach becomes more critical and that can be only confined by adopting a self structured questionnaire in terms of quantitative method. On the other hand, qualitative approach is completely people oriented phenomena adapted to know their

own perceptions. It has also been nominated as world's phenomena that can be used to obtain their gist of observing the social grounds (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative technique is linked with understanding, analyzing, determining and investigating the phenomenon of research and the senses allied with that phenomenon (defining a account or narration) instead of testing the hypothesis (Ryan, 2000). However there are the problems of generalization of results.

For the purpose of the study, the qualitative methods like content analysis and free elicitation, has been applied for designing and derive the unstructured part relevant for theoretical definitions and to discover the constructs significant to targeted sample population of the study. Whereas, quantitative method has been applied for the concern of measuring awareness level, Silk route perception as a destination brand applied using structured questionnaire methods on 5-point Likert scale.

3.2 RESEARCH PROCESS: QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE METHODS

The research procedure of this thesis is consisted of two phases. The 1st stage was completed with qualitative perspective & constructed to develop a list of attributes for destination branding and that further can be employed to Silk Route as a complete destination brand in tourism market. Branding strategies of destination(s) needs in depth study hence supported by the qualitative methods including employed content analysis and free elicitation. At this stage, the literature review was conducted and pilot testing of the questionnaire was done on small groups of respondents (303 in numbers) to identify the attributes relevant for Silk route branding. During this process, previous literature and research on destination branding elements has been referred and content analysis of various Indian tour operators & stakeholders' projected perception regarding Silk Route and its induced destinations and the utilization of numerous constructs of the pilot surveys was done. Finally, a list containing different branding strategies that might be significant to Indian Silk Route from the literature, various tour operators' perception about Silk Route was prepared and extraction of the various strategies relevant for the study was done during the pilot testing.

Construct elicitation on destination branding and related aspects by qualitative techniques decreases the possibility of binding respondents to respond to a restricted aura

of available choices and there may be the chances of inaccurate representation of their thought about a targeted aspect. On the other hand pilot survey is the method to assess the language used in a questionnaire, progression and design which further makes the respondents familiar with researcher; to define and systematize the fieldwork; to calculate rate of response; make evaluation of time to fill questionnaire; and to examine analysis process (Veal, 2006). Content analysis is a process linked with qualitative investigation used to examine the written information or substance, generally written documents and manuscripts, in an organized method to enumerate their content via grouping all the related constructs into a single category/group (Bryman, 2008). Analysis of contents of printed information from brochures, reports, guidebooks required for the study has been done in order to derive significant amounts of information about Silk Route destinations in India.

In the second phase, on the basis of derived constructs or attributes recognized by respondents to define the destination branding strategies and related perspectives, structured procedure has been applied to measure directly the awareness level and perception of Silk Route held by the population of the study. In the design stage, specific attention has been given to the basic construct of the study; phraseology and sequencing of the questions created. Measurement included asking the respondents to rate the attributes relevant for study. The Measurement technique involved 5-point Likert scaling technique. However, the problems of errors and misapprehensions were minimized with the help of expert pilot testing.

3.3 ATTRIBUTE SELECTION AND PREPARATION

Since the exact studies on route branding or aligned destinations are not available analysis of literature of destination branding, was conducted to derive the constructs and attributes relevant for the study. Finally, a list of structured attributes pertinent to tourists and stakeholders about Silk Route as a tourists' destination was enlisted (Annexure I).

Finally, it was quantified that the three attributes of destination branding such as, Destination brand communication, brand perception and development can further be used for study analysis in pursuit of branding perspective of Silk Route. For the purpose of pilot testing of the questionnaire, 400 questionnaires were distributed in Jammu state (Jammu and Kashmir). There were 365 returned questionnaires and out of which only 303

were usable, signifying 75% rate of response. The purpose of pilot testing was to drive the most holistic constructs pertinent to the study so as to make them a base to prepare the final version of the questionnaire of attributes of Silk Route branding.

The questionnaire was divided to four sections. All these were based upon destination perception, awareness, and brand development of Silk Route if promoted. Free elicitation endorsed respondents to describe strategies relevant to Silk Route as a destination brand without any pre-defined construct related to the research. The aim of elicitation of these constructs from the targeted population was to attain more refined representation of the Silk Route as a destination brand.

Content analysis of available govt. reports and brochures available from some of the Indian travel agents or tour operators provide a general outlook about how silk route can be marketed by using various promotional means. Some of the Indian tour operators and stakeholders projected Silk Route branding beneficial to long term tourism strategies. Furthermore some tour operators offering Silk Route packages in Sikkim were also approached for the same perspective and they tagged the silk route as enriched tourism trail and their views to brand Indian Silk Route were considered in the questionnaire. Finally, a structured format of questionnaire was designed and prepared so as to make the survey process easy. Overall, the final questionnaire was enlisted with attributes based on literature concerning destination branding, content analysis of various documents or reports available by some Indian tour operators, travel agents & stakeholders. At last pilot testing on small sample of Indian tour operators and tourists from Jammu and Kashmir was conducted.

3.4 RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION

3.4.1 Research Population and Sample Size determination

It is not possible for the study investigator to target the whole population because of inclusion of larger areas and less time availability. And so is the case with this study as thus needs a cautious approach to justify the study. The total population of tourists to Jammu and Kashmir was 1,14,73,588 and registered travel agents/tour operators were 39. The tourists population to Uttar Pradesh was 14,64,30,100 and the registered travel agents/tour operators were 57 in numbers (Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, 2012). The tourists' population in Sikkim was 5578942 and registered travel agents/tour

operators were 180 (Tourism and Civil Aviation Department, Govt. of Sikkim, 2012). Since it was not possible to target the whole population the sample technique was applied as according to Gray (2013), if whole population cannot be targeted, a sample might be chosen from the that particular population for the ease of the study.

The sample size was determined and cross checked by using formula (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

$$\text{Sample size} = \frac{\chi^2 NP (1-p)}{D^2 (n-1) + \chi^2 p (1-p)}$$

χ^2 = Table Value of chi square @ df = 1 for desired confidence level of

0.1=2.71, 0.05= 3.84, 0.01=6.64, 0.001=10.83

Where N= population size (assumed to be 0.50)

P= Population Proportion

Destinations	Target Entities	Population	Individual Sample Size
Uttar Pradesh	Tourists	146430100	784
	Travel agencies/tour operators	39	29
Jammu and Kashmir	Tourists	11473588	784
	Travel agents/tour operators	57	47
Sikkim	Tourists	5578942	390
	Travel agents/tour operators	180	123
Total Sample Size			2157

Table3.1: Sample Size Determination

3.4.2 Sampling Process

Convenience sampling technique has been applied to attain completed questionnaires swiftly and reasonably (Zikmund, 2003). The usage of factor analysis in this study allows at least ten-to-one ratio of remarks to given variables as 10-15 participants per variable have been suggested for drawing good sample size (Field, 2009). While variables related to study were observed to 33 which were further analyzed. Consequently the minimum sample size observed to be analyzed these variables was 330 for pilot survey. To collect the required amount of completed study questionnaires, a sample tourists visiting Jammu (J&K) were surveyed. The total number of 400 questionnaires was distributed among tour operator and tourists in Jammu state.

In accordance with Sarantakos (1998 cited Jennings 2001), sampling requires issue being derived from the population targeted and involved in the investigation study & this sample must be an adequate representative that further may ensures generalizability of the results which means that the derived sample population must possess the characteristics (more or less) of overall population.

3.5 SELF ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE

A self-administered questionnaire was circulated among tourists visiting the concerned destinations as well tour operators of Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim extensively for the purpose of data collection. The self-administered questionnaire (SAQ) stands for a questionnaire that has been prepared exclusively to be completed by a respondent without researchers' interference (e.g. an interviewer) while collecting the data (Lavrakas, 2008). The survey instrument was supported by cover letter addressing the substance of this research so as to attain the respondents' interest and support. Also the tourists were addressed about the basic concept of Silk Route in India and its related destinations with the help of an attached brochure/pamphlet so as to attain fair and relevant responses.

3.5.1 Design of the Questionnaire

The motive behind utilizing a questionnaire for collection of data depends upon the purpose of attaining a huge and more refined illustration for the study. Another rationale was, the respondents for this study were selected to be prospective and potential

tourists who actually travelled to such destinations that are connected to the ancient Silk Route as well as the travel agents present at those destinations and consequently, a large sample was targeted for response collection. Overall, the questionnaire was integrated with structured questions to attain the awareness level of the tourists and travel agents about the Indian Silk Route, their knowledge and views about the Silk Route tourism and branding strategies for the Silk Route as tourism product.

During the survey process, it was assumed that respondents may not be aware or may very less be known to Silk Route especially in India. In order to make them aware and to attain the relevant responses and also to lessen the biased approach towards the study the additional pamphlet containing relevant information was provided to the respondents so make survey easier and reliable (*Annexure II*).

The questionnaire contained five categories of questions. First section/Section A represented the social and demographic information of the participants. Questions on awareness about Indian Silk Route and its related destinations were given in Section ‘B’ of the survey instrument i.e. questionnaire. In section ‘C’ and ‘D’, necessary attributes for Silk Route tourism Perception and Brand Development were obtained from previous studies. Section E featured questions to analyze the destination communication attributes for Silk Route as a destination brand. The respondents were requested to provide their responses on 5-point likert scale (where 1= highly disagree and 5= highly agree).

3.6 DATA COLLECTION AND RESPONSE RATE

Final data was collected from Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim states of India. For the purpose of data collection tourists visiting J&K, U.P. and Sikkim was targeted. Also the government registered tour operators/travel agents from targeted areas were approached to attain defined results. Total 2157 questionnaires were distributed out of which only 1650 were returned representing 76.4% response rate.

Destinations	Number of questionnaires distributed	Number of questionnaires received and valid	Response Rate
Jammu and Kashmir			
Tourists	784	662	84.4%
Travel agents	29	21	72.4%

Uttar Pradesh			
Tourists	784	577	73.5%
Travel Agents	47	39	82.9%
Sikkim			
Tourists	390	275	70.5%
Travel Agents	123	76	61.7%
Total	2157	1650	76.4%

Table3.2: Response Rate Analysis

Source: Primary Research

Relatively high response rate calculated in Jammu and Kashmir region was because of sufficient time given to the data collection approx. two to three months of consecutive peak seasons of tourism in 2013 and 2014. The response rate was supported by the indulgence of tour operators interest to the queries asked through self structured questionnaire. Whereas time and distance constraint was observed in the low response rate from Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim.

3.7 QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS

The self administered questionnaire has further been analyzed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences), software version 22.0. As factor analysis is an independence technique whose major rationale is to identify and classify the primary structure existed between the variables in the examination (Hair et al., 2006), the technique was applied on 33 variables related to the study. For the purpose of completing the analysis of the factors that are considered significant, the first step is usually pursued by factors rotation that was retained (Abdi, 2003). SPSS offers five methods of rotations and in relevance to this study VARIMAX rotation method was applied for factor extraction. VARIMAX rotation is generally presumed to be a simplified technique to simplify the structure of various factors. It has been a successful technique in attaining an orthogonal rotation of factors as it clearly separates the factors (Hair et al., 2006). All 33 destination branding variables were further condensed to core dimensions by the usage of VARIMAX rotation of factor analysis.

Descriptive statistics predominantly means, and frequency percentages were applied for analysis. In statistical terminology two statistical methods: univariate; bivariate techniques, have been applied for data analysis in relation to this study. Single

variables have been analyzed by means of univariate statistical methods like percentages, means and standard deviation. Further the bivariate techniques are used to analyze the association among two dimensions or variables including dependent & independent variable. Whereas multivariate methods like factor analysis and regression are used to examine the relationship among more than two variables. However before deciding upon the statistical technique, the researcher is supposed to ensure the data is normally distributed in the population so as to decide between non-parametric and parametric methods or techniques (Bryman, 2008).

3.7.1 Questionnaire's Validity and Reliability

As the survey instrument used for present study is self structured questionnaire, validity and reliability stands crucial for its further processing. Validity determines whether the study investigation exactly analyze which was proposed to analyze or how real the study outcomes are (Hair et al., 2009). In other words, validity of questionnaire stands accepted only if it measures the objectives of the proposed research (Easterby-Smith, 1991; Bryman, 2004 & 2008). The study involved samples from three different populations (Jammu & Kashmir, U.P and Sikkim) and the validation of this study is comprehensive to the overall population.

Furthermore reliability has been defined as the degree to which a research instrument like questionnaire, trial, observation or any analysis procedure generates the same results on repeated usage (Malhotra, 2008). So, reliability test has been applied to analyze the consistency of the chosen survey instrument so as to attain desired results. More specifically, Cronbach α (alpha) was analyzed/ applied using SPSS version 22.0, to test the reliability of the survey scale. The alpha value of 0.70 is the minimum adequate criterion for representing internal reliability (Hair et al., 2009). The Cronbach α (alpha) for all the 33 items of the study was calculated to 0.851 (>0.70), which gives a cue to the constructs (items) consistency and reliability for further research process.

3.8 DATA EXAMINATION

3.8.1 Outlier Recognition

Detection/recognition of outliers targets to discover the patterns in data that challenges the normal conduct (Singh and Upadhyaya, 2012). In general outlier is an

observation in the data set which remains isolated from rest of the data. However statisticians have developed various techniques for outliers' detection, box plot has been considered as one of the most important techniques to look out for outliers (Field, 2005). Box plot technique has been used to determine item to item outliers in the data set. The entire data was found to 21 and thus were deleted.

3.8.2 Normality Determination

The normality determination of data is a significant for normal and continuous distribution in statistical analysis not just due to a reason that a large number of frequency distributions have about normal forms, but also the theoretical consequence of the normal curve in the field of statistical conjecture (Sonia et al., 2012). Before applying any statistical tests, assessment of normality is a prerequisite. So, before pursuing for parametrical tests, normality distribution of the data was assessed using various available methods. For the requirement of the study graphical methods for checking normality of the data (Park, 2008) were used.

3.8.2.1 Graphical Method

The Q-Q plot or quantile-quantile plot output was utilized to define normality of data. The Q-Q plot evaluates the observed quantiles of sampled data with the subsequent quantiles of a speculative distribution, selected previously (Sonia et al., 2012). According to Field (2005), if the data can only be analyzed as normally distributed if only the data points lie approximately on a straight diagonal line, and if the data points drifts away from that straight diagonal line then it is not normally distributed. The Normal Q-Q Plot represents the empirical quantiles, i.e., the organized sample data alongside the theoretical quantiles, i.e., the quantiles of the standard normal distribution for Destination Communication (DC), Brand Development (BD), and Perception towards Silk Route (PSR).

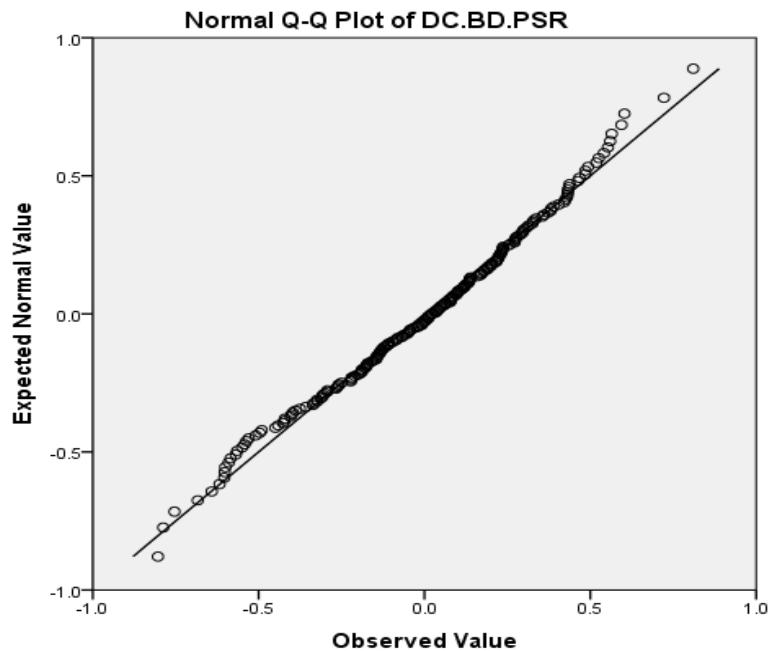


Figure 3.1: Quantile-Quantile (Q-Q) Plot

Since the figure 3.1 depicted that all the data points lies closer or nearer to the diagonally straight line and no point was lied outside, it can be said that the data selected for the study is normally distributed.

3.8.2.2 Numeric Method

For numerical normality check, skewness and kurtosis were conducted as it provides clues to the normality of data (Field, 2005). In the present study, test for skewness and kurtosis has been conducted on Destination communication (DC), Brand Development (BD), Perception towards Silk Route (PSR) with the help of SPSS software (22.0 version) and these all were ranged between -0.161 to 0.722, and -0.113 to 0.736 respectively. According to Gao et al. (2008) data normality can be defined well when its values for skewness and kurtosis lies between -1.0 to +1.0 or nearer to zero which further suggested that the data used in the study is normally distributed.

3.9 HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION

At the global level, brand depicts a title or a tag which are linked with a product; within the intellect, symbolizes a mental illustration, a thought, a perception or a psychological connotation of a consumer (Tybout and Carpenter, 2001). Observing or hearing about the brand makes mind to generate certain linkages among the organization

or product for the ultimate customer (Schaar, 2013) and similarly when destinations like Silk Route, struggle for differentiating themselves from the competitors, destination personality is observed as an effective instrument for understanding perception of a place among tourists (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006; Aaker, 1996 cited in Antonsen, 2010). DMOs such as unplanned communication tools like word-of-mouth or consumers own perceptions of the touristic product or destination (Berry and Seltman, 2007). Thus communications continuously reveals the value of a brand to avoid confusion in marketplace (Antonsen, 2010). Further brand perceptions emerges from a range of resource, involving customer understandings, WOM (Word of Mouth) and communications (Krishnan, 1996) and further people connect their elucidations of understanding with others by explaining stories and describing various accounts (Govers and Go, 2003) which will influence the amount of information obtained and efforts conducted in this process of search (Lopes, 2011). In context to this, knowing how tourists' perceive about a destination is vital for the future development of the destination (Boukas, 2008) as they act and respond higher considering their own perceptions and less on the basis of ground reality (Kelly, 1950 cited in Donkor et al., 2013). And when a destination is promoted with certain perceptions in mind, there appears a space for trends and developments that could have an impactful effect on both the destination and the brand (Baker, 2012). In fact, marketers of a destination should be aware of particular strategy to adopt with their brand which could further make their brand more inspirational or more reliable (Lodge, 2002). So, to create a unique and effective destination as a tourism brand it is important to determine what tourists already aware about your particular destination and then decide a appropriate mix of brand characteristics for positive promotion of its image (Prebensen 2007; Schaar, 2013). These literature perspectives continued to form hypotheses to test the linkages between the different constructs under investigation, i.e.

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between Destination Brand Perception towards Silk Route tourism and Destination Brand Communication (DC).

Hypothesis 2: Brand Perception (Perception towards Silk Route Tourism, PSR) has a positive impact on Brand Development (BD) of Silk Route.

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CHAPTER 4

STRATEGIC DESTINATION BRANDING OF SILK ROUTE FOR MAXIMIZING ITS TOURISM POTENTIAL IN INDIA

It is clear from previous chapters that destination brand communication, destination brand development and destination perception are the main constructs of destination branding. This chapter explores major areas of the tourism along Silk Route in India. The objective of present chapter is to induce a defined knowledge of Indian Silk Route destination(s), their cultural, historical, geographical and economic assets that can be used as a foundation to the development of Silk Route as a tourism destination brand. Consequently, this chapter encompasses the sections regarding tourism along Silk Route, i.e. tourism development and marketing the route as a tourism destination or product.

4.1 INDIAN SILK ROUTE TOURISM OFFERINGS

Today, the tourist selects their destination according to the overall quantity of attractions it has to present, perception that the destination and its brand offers through the overall number of attractions (Meža and Šerić, 2014). The stretch of Silk Route has tremendous assets to offer to tourism sector that needs to be reevaluated and justified to contemporary phenomenon. Tourism destination consideration at first relies on the understanding of the types of tourism and related aesthetic benefits it offers. The linkage of India and its various destinations has already been defined in this thesis (i.e. Chapter1), whereas understanding the tourism concept may provide a refined facet of the study. In addition, according to Olsen (2003), from a visitor's perspective, a critical mass of attractions is needed to overcome the distance and the Silk route's alignment, its ecological and natural diversity provides a nationwide continuum of tourism offerings. If in particular, the induced Silk Route sites are taken they may contribute to create an amalgamated tourism package which includes:

4.1.1. *Historical/Cultural/Archaeological Tourism*

Although destinations along Silk Route are bestowed with cultural heritage and archaeological sites, they have potential to serve many tourists from all over the world as one of magnificent segments of tourism yield. Also Kovács and Martyin, (2013) in their

study has defined thematic routes creation as one of the most spreading technique used for the development of cultural tourism, which categorize the tourist attractions in a spatial configuration, additional guide and information to the tourists. Evidences of heritage and archaeological sites found at various destinations of India contribute to such aspect of tourism. The twelve enlisted archaeological sites by UNESCO located in Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, U.P, Bihar and Tamil Nadu represents such attribute of tourism. Whereas Uttar Pradesh and Bihar state of India is already on the tourism list for Buddhist circuit. The decrepit Safa Kadal Sarai (Kashmir) which once remained a transit point for Mughal who travelled India for trade purpose via Silk Route (Ashraf, 2007). The archeological site of Harwan is also situated in the district Baramulla of Kashmir region and the ancient sites of Hushkapur (present Ushkur), Parihaspora Buddhist Site (Kashmir), 2,000 years old archaeological sites of Amabaran at Akhnoor (Jammu region) elaborate their importance to cite the definition to Silk route in terms of archaeological or heritage tourism.

4.1.2 Religious Tourism

Aligned with the Silk Route, Indian destinations have immense provision for religious tourism and the same can better be understood with the example of tourism Buddhist trail or circuit of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh Region. The four major spots of Kushinagar, Bodhgaya, Sarnath and Rajgir have attracted more than 90% of domestic tourists and more than 83% of foreign tourists to the trail in only in 2012. Moreover, the number increased continuously at all major sites and majorly to Rajgir/Nalanda increased at 48% and 80% by both domestic Indian and foreign tourists (International Finance Corporation, 2012). Such evaluations provide an outline to the provision for tourism development to linked destinations if promoted at the same time. The list does not get limited over these two regions nonetheless the aligned destinations may provide the niche for tourism along the route. The missing strategy and linkage information to Silk Route has made these destinations available to the tourists as religious destinations and not as Silk Route destinations. Promoting such aspect of these destinations may provide way out to introduce the tourism along the Indian Silk Route.

4.1.3 Adventure Tourism

This segment is growing at faster rate and in fact it is estimated that on average, 20 lakh people use to take adventure tourism in India (Maps of India.com, 2015). Stretch of destinations along Himalayas offer sufficient avenues for adventure tourism development. Nubra valley of Leh (Ladakh region) offers tourism services like mountain exploration, camel safari, trekking, rock climbing, camping, mountain biking. Shyok River at Nubra valley also provides the provision for river rafting. In fact, the complete drive of mountainous Silk Route destinations up to the archaeological site of Ambaran at Akhnoor (Jammu region) has potential for adventure tourism which also includes Gurez valley of Kashmir region and Khardung La and Jelep La of Sikkim.

4.1.4 Eco-Tourism

Eco tourism activities are supposedly inclined towards nature and wildlife preservation. Indian Silk Route destinations of J&K and Sikkim have preserved nature amidst Himalayas and are the vicinity of unexplored sites. Such dispersed destinations in the country delineate the ecotourism from east to west part of the country. It is not only these particular sites or destinations like Nubra (Leh, Ladakh), Gurez (Kashmir), Zuluk or Jelep La Pass (Sikkim) that can serve the market with eco tourism practices but the whole region of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh (Jammu & Kashmir state) to Sikkim have the potential for such segment development. As an example, Sikkim has been declared as “Eco-Tourism Destination” by the Tourism Ministry (Government of India) at a national conference organized at Gangtok on December 6, 2009 (Government of Sikkim, 2010).

4.1.5 Wellness Tourism

Indian Silk Route destinations are also inclined to add compliments to this segment. Availability of mineral springs, natural herbs etc. at these destinations may provide different health and benefits to the tourists. The hot water sulphur springs of Nubra valley (Ladakh) and Sikkim offers wellness tourism amenities as sulphur is reputed to cure skin infections and contain other medicinal properties (Manhas and Kour, 2014). Furthermore treks of Ladakh valley, Kashmir valley and Sikkim, pilgrimage and meditation centers of Buddhist circuit that offers the retreat to tourists who travel either for wellness or escape purpose.

4.2 TOURISM POTENTIAL IDENTIFICATION

India's linkage to Silk Route has already been discussed in previous chapter whereas its potential identification can better be understood with the knowledge of various halts or points or destinations aligned with it. The Silk Road, with its historically renowned name or brand, emerged as a precious resource to be fabricated and developed (Chan and Bauer, n.d.). Considering the tourism potential of the Silk route destinations in India, it has a variety to offer to the tourists of every taste and choice. For the nature and adventure lovers Nubra Valley that lies on the ancient Silk Road that joined the medieval land of Leh (capital of Ladakh), to Central Asia, offers a great opportunity (Rommi, 2010). Moreover Jelep-la was one of the regularly utilized route for trade and the opening of Jelep-la additionally with Nathu-la, would induce a momentum to trade and industry activities (Harris, 2008).

While Uttar Pradesh consists of numerous religious as well as historically famous destinations which attract tourists, the region of Bihar is endowed with of a circuit of Buddhist temples that has huge potential for tourism (Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services Report, 2012). In a report submitted to Ministry of Tourism and Government of India in 2012, ILFS (Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services) has analyzed the tourism potential and increase in tourism trend by the Buddhists' destinations at Uttar Pradesh till 2008 (Refer to Fig. 4.1 and Fig.4.2).

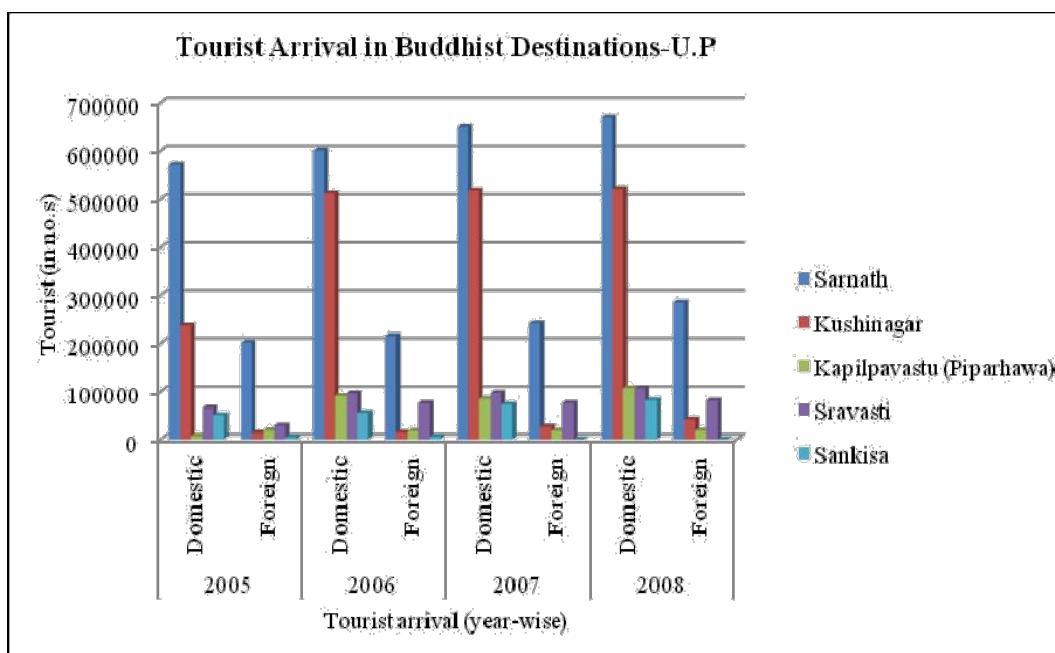


Figure 4.1: Tourist arrival trends in Buddhist destinations, Uttar Pradesh

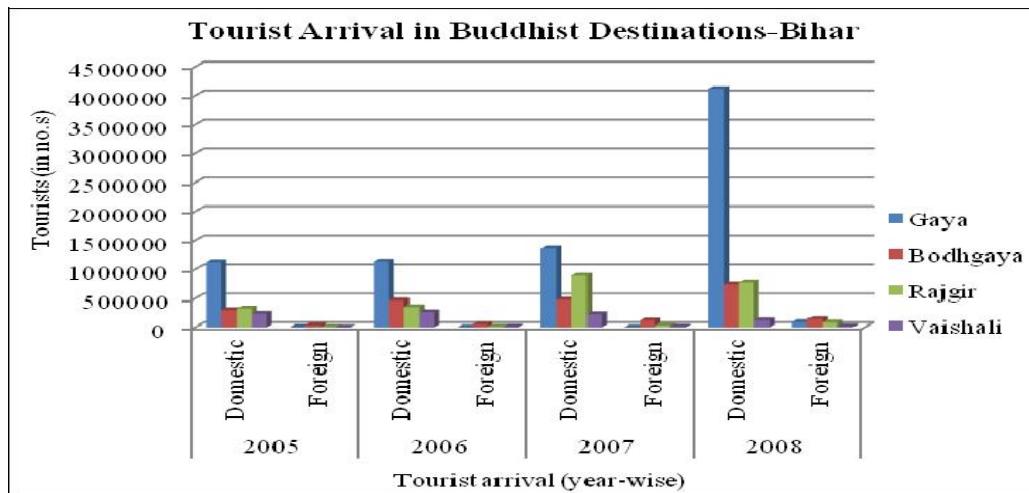


Figure 4.2: Tourist arrival trends in Buddhist destinations, Bihar

These estimates (Fig. 4.1 & 4.2) indicate that the three destinations including Gaya (Bodhgaya) Kushinagar, Rajgir and Sarnath are the major sites that enlisted a large figure of tourist visits (including both foreign and domestic) (ILFS, 2012). Whereas, the sites as Sravasti, Sankisa Kapilavastu and Vaishali are also potential destinations that should be developed and promoted as to make the travel along this circuit more vibrant for tourists.

Furthermore analyzing above given data in totality (Table 4.1) for the future tourism potential of these destinations as a circuit may serve to be positive track towards the development process altogether, i.e. Sarnath, Kushinagar, Kapilavastu, Saravasti, Sankisa, Gaya, Rajgir & Table 4.1).

Years	Total no. of Tourist Arrivals	Bodhgaya, Vaishali (Refer)
2005	104337	
2006	3975660	
2007	4906276	
2008	8011444	

Table 4.1: Total no. of Tourist arrival at Buddhist destinations of U.P and Bihar

All these above discussed destinations are a part of Silk Route their tourism arrival along the circuit is forecasted for the year 2016 using the least square method Time series “T- Factor” is applied (Refer Table 4.2).

Years	No of tourist arrivals	Deviations from 2006.5	x	xy	x^2	$\hat{y} = a + bx$
2005	104337	-1.5	-3	-313011	9	-33224445.5
2006	3975660	-0.5	-1	-3975660	1	-8259251.8
2007	4906276	0.5	1	4906276	1	16705841.8
2008	8011444	1.5	3	24034332	9	41671135.5
TOTAL	16893380	----	----	249651937	20	-----
2016(forecasted figure)	141531910.35 (obtained after applying the least square method of time series for calculating the trend)					

Table 4.2: Trend Analysis for U.P & Bihar

As $\Sigma y = na + b\Sigma x$,

$$\therefore a = \Sigma y/n, 16893380/4 = 4223345$$

$$\text{Also } \Sigma xy = a\Sigma x + b\Sigma x$$

$$\therefore b = \Sigma xy / \Sigma x^2, 249651937/20 = 12482596.85$$

$$\text{Hence } \hat{y} = (2016) = 4223345 + (12482596.85) (11) = 141531910.35$$

The above given interpretation (table 4.2) to the tourist arrival gives a brief idea about the tourists' arrivals at circuit of Buddhist sites in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh that falls in Silk Route map. In order to calculate the trend value (\hat{y}) for a particular year 2016, the value of "a" and "b" is needed, which is calculated after applying the above statistical formulas like Summation of x and xy. It has been seen that the services and facilities available at this region, posses the potential of serving 141531910.35, thus indicating the tourism potential to be gained by the destinations.

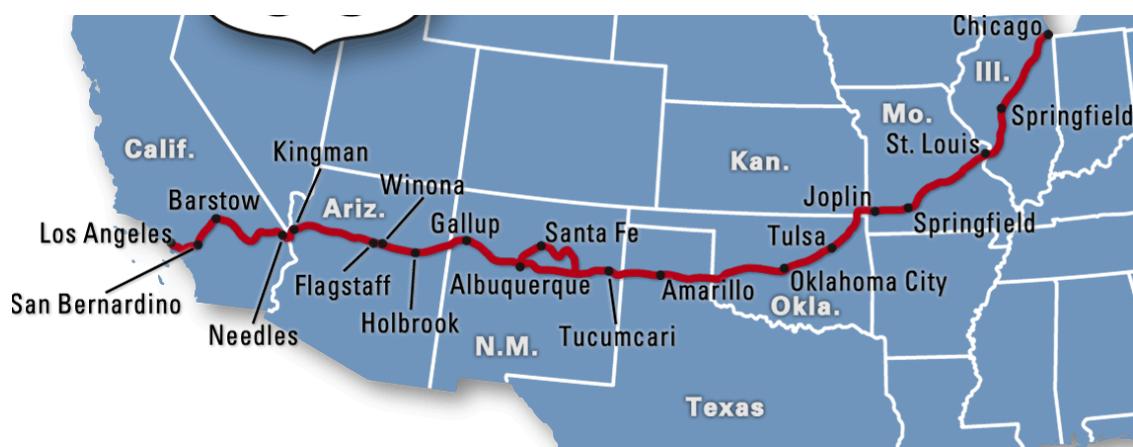
Consequently, where developed sites need updated and renewed services, these impending sites aspires for more concentration towards necessary tourist resources and marketing aspects. More particularly, they need to be marketed as Silk Route destinations, which have been a major aspect of their existence. Analysis of tourism potential at the Silk Route destinations may not only promote the related or induced destination but also serve in raising the development graph by the direct or indirect economy generation through tourism.

The above discussed potential findings only emphasizes the perspective tourism assets and resources the Silk Route destinations could offer to the tourists whereas the requirement for understanding the explicit development formula, drawing key elements for success and preparing the development framework is paramount important. The basic idea for discussion of these cases is to go beyond the theoretical findings and to provide the practical foundation and clarity for development of comprehensive planning strategy for development of Silk Route as a tourism destination.

4.3 EXAMPLE CASE STUDIES

4.3.1 Route 66

Established in 1926 by Federal Highway Act as an implementation to the movement along better roads the Route 66 (also known as Will Rogers Highway) with its attractions attracted thousands of tourists to California as a tourist destination of the West. It has remained choice for local American tourists from the postwar era. It was established with the purpose of connecting diminutive and less developed towns of Middle West, detoured with previously constructed roads (e.g. Lincoln and Dixie Highway), with the developed East part of USA. The road formed a stretch between Chicago and Los Angeles covering approx distance of 2488 miles (i.e. 3940 kms.) and passes through eight federal states: California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri and Illinois (Banić-Grubišić, 2012) (Refer Map 4.1).



Map 4.1: Route map of the Route 66

Source: Dunn (2015)

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the importance of Route 66 turned low for road travelers as they moved to a more proficient stretch with well developed express highway system that was started in 1956 (Listokin, 2011). After Post World War II era Route 66 became a cultural icon for tourists (Carden, 2006) as it regained its tourist interest with the development of new establishments like motels and restaurants and other infrastructural and amenities development. In present scenario, tourists spend 38 million dollar per year in communities along Route 66 in accordance with preservation through revitalization programs; approximately 2400 employments are generated every year and fiscal initiatives directly associated with route add about 127 million dollar annually to the state GDP (Listokin, 2011).

4.3.1.1 Development Initiative along Route 66:

As the significance for cultural tourism is constantly growing within the overall tourism marketplace (Nagy, 2012) tourism along this route represents an interesting phenomenon for culture together with tourism studies. Studies related to self-drive tourism phenomenon has so far focused on the financial characteristics of such movements and examined its function in the regional growth (Sivijs, 2003; Taylor and Prideaux, 2008). In terms of Route 66 tours, travelers spend their major time in traveling and their whole driving turns out as a destination (Listokin, 2011). Kibby (2000) has elaborated Route 66 as an example for heritage site conservation where tourists get motivated by melancholy for a popular-culture history. The preservation and revitalization efforts have been conducted across the Route 66 representing the continuous concern by the various authorities of the state to make it sustained in the travel market since 1987 which first lend the mark for formation of Route 66 Association of Arizona and hence was further followed by the foundation of Associations for Route 66 in Missouri, Illinois, and Oklahoma (1989); Associations for Route 66 in New Mexico, Kansas, and California (1990) and Association of Texas Old Route 66 (1991).

Other major advents the history of this route were the formation of National Historic Route 66 Federation for preservation of Route 66 throughout the United States in 1995. The survey for historic assets in the city of Mexico (1994) and Illinois (1995) and Arizona by different authorities and federations added more features to this process. The main advantage can be accounted by the nomination and reauthorization of Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program in 2009 (Listokin, 2011). Overall it was for more refined

approach of route development different preservation and maintenance programmes like The National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, Main Street Program and National Scenic Byways Program were adopted. All these initiatives were taken with the prospects:

1. To generate a directory of financial and Technical support for discovering and classifying historic assets and subsidize their rehabilitation;
2. To recognize the challenges faced by the local community;
3. To support main street communities across the road considering their benefits and preservation of their resources;
4. To ensure participations and funding in development of establishments along the route;
5. To ensure historic conservation, marketing, development of essential resources and infrastructural expansion of the road to alleviate tourists' movement (such as roadside rest areas and interpretive centers);
6. To revitalize the tourism along route and make it sustained in the tourism marketplace.

4.3.1.2 Success Factors:

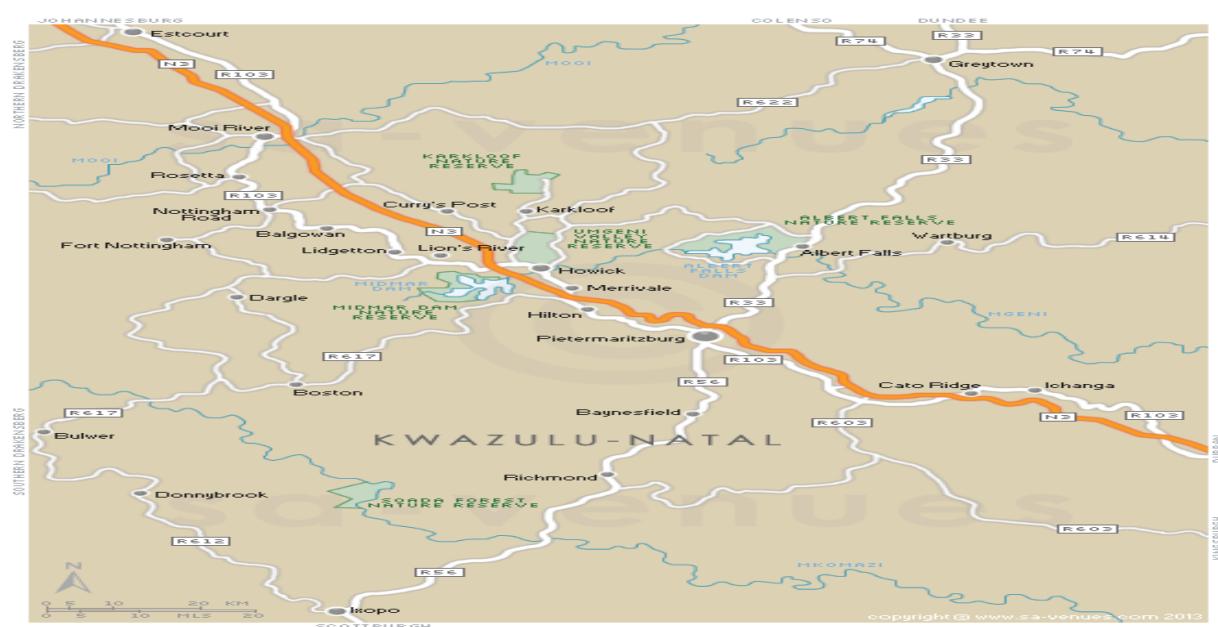
Route 66 depicts a strong relation among culture, tourism development and rehabilitation of sites intact along the route. It sent a significant remark to concurrent places extending primary socio-economic benefits to communities and tourism industry of United States. One of the major factors is its marketing considerations adopted by the authorities like promotion through blogs, movies or TV advertisements etc. and adoption of contemporary tourism forms like drive tourism has made its recognition and identification easy for the tourists thus inculcating efficient choice perspective in their mind. Overall, the Route 66 has played its vital role for strategic development and diversification for tourism sector of the adjoined destinations. The contribution of various institutions and efforts made by the aligned states since 1985 added continuous newer dimensions to Route development and promotion. It offers a setting of bravura stretch and assets to tourists.

Although the concept of Route 66 is little different from Silk Route which represents the world's connectivity and is being considered from historical being developed in other countries, the Route 66 gives a representation as an exclusive, highly

flourishing and sustained destination from tourism viewpoint. This case study of the Route 66 thus highlights the key dimensions for the route illustrating associations between major characteristic such as heritage preservation, promotional reformation, support practices by organizations, individual and collaborative framework by intact regions for the route in USA.

4.3.2 Tourism Routes of South Africa

South Africa is consisted of several reasonably famous and developed routes for tourism, such as the Midlands Meander of KwaZulu-Natal and wine routes of Western Cape (Lourens, 2007; Rogerson, 2009). According to a report given by Wines of South Africa (WOSA) (2015), South Africa positions on seventh number in overall wine production and produces 4.2% of the world's wine. In terms of world wine production which overall consists of sixteen wine routes located in Northern and Western Cape. These wines routes comprise the Wellington Wine Route, the Tulbagh Wine Route, Paarl Vintners, the Constantia Wine Route and Breedekloof (WOSA, 2015) (Refer Map 4.2). In terms of tourism approx 43 percent of all foreign tourists visiting Western Cape, travel only through the Cape Winelands (SWAIS Report, 2015) thus generating the thematic link to the route. The major objectives of opening of such kind of routes are: increasing attention, knowledge, cooperation expansion, fresh marketplace, packaging, development, decrease expenditures, protection, regulating the trends, etc. (Nagy, 2012).



Map 4.2: Map of Midlands Meander, South Africa

Source: SA-Venues.com (2015)

Route situated in KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa, with its topographic borders expanded from Hilton (which lies to the south) to Mooi River (lies to the north) which is approximately 70 kilometers and in the west, approx. 40 kilometers to central Drakensberg and 30 kilometers east towards the Karlkloof indigenous forest and Curry's Post (Lourens, 2008) remained famous among tourists as Midlands Meander. The route offers beautiful attractions as a tourism destination with its basic product contributions like arts and crafts, rural products and picturesque countryside environment (Mathfield, 2000). The Midlands Meander majorly attracts wealthy white tourists from South Africa (Snowball and Courtney, 2010).

4.3.2.1 Success Factors:

The launch of Stellenbosch Wine Route in April, 1973 gave a thrust to wine tourism across South Africa (Stellenbosch Wine Route, 2008). The success such subject accompanied was the significance of creating an image in the market, thus incited the ray for development to other undeveloped routes (Hall et al., 2000).

The major point of success for Midlands Meander is aligned with the foundation of Midlands Meander Association (MMA) which led the tourism industry to focus on specific niche market and defined marketing consistency and alliances. Being an entirely private sector funded route exemplifies the efforts conducted in co-operation with the public sector by the Association in branding, development, marketing and local planning issues (Rogerson, 2004).

On the whole these international tourism routes provide a beneficial insight to development and branding structure of Silk Route especially in India along with issues effective management of the route and its destinations. The tourism structure and success factors employed by authorities in USA's Route 66 and Wine routes and Midlands Meanders provide a directional essence for tourism development along Indian Silk Route along with its branding and sustenance like analysis of opportunities for tourism along Silk Route, provisional tourism structure and benefits of tourism development etc. as discussed in the other sections of this chapter.

4.4 OPPORTUNITY ANALYSIS FOR TOURISM ALONG SILK ROUTE

Tourism has emerged an ideology for development of a destination (Manhas et al., 2014). Being a linked attribute of tourism destinations, the Silk Road may serve as a drapery of assets blended with distinctive & exotic assets of archaeology, natural environment, culture from different historical backgrounds, people etc. from all over its stretch. Regardless of its position as a global connectivity icon, its basic essence has always been neglected and without which the identity of Indian destinations and its varied culture could also be considered almost incomplete. Moreover, Silk Route has not been much discussed in academic research and is seen from the perspective trade, travel, and cultural exchanges etc. which if carefully defined, are all linked to tourism terminology of modern day.

The Silk Route can be changed from a compilation of different destinations to an exotic travel experience to facilitate and motivate various tourism divisions through which economic and other benefits can be generated and thus make a reckonable rejuvenation of the historical aspect of the said route. At the end of a route, a tourist attraction helps to bring attention to those destinations on the trip that would not have attracted travelers as solitary destinations or in their position as conventional entrance point to a region (Moulin and Boniface, 2001). Thus, the main concept of developing the tourism along the Silk route is simple, namely that of the connecting together a sequence of tourism resources for promoting domestic tourism and motivating tourists to take a trip from one destination to another destination (Lourens, 2008). In fact, defining the Silk Route along with tourism may provide a new dimension and vision to development authorities. The Silk Road economies are just beginning to tap into it (UNWTO, 2009) and in fact some initiatives to promote Silk Route has already been considered by other countries like a opening of a modernized farm of silk worm of little Greek town in Soufli and Egypt's Red Sea coastline possess some of the premium asset of scuba diving in the world where Indian cruise liners once deliver their consignments of silk (UNWTO, 2007). Rogerson (2004; 2007) has added that routes can be served as product or theme based and in context to this Silk Route serves to both the concept of tourism.

Developing Silk Route on tourism grounds make it ideal for cross-border or regional investment opportunities as clustering or grouping could change the proportional benefits of the individual areas into the viable improvement of the entire region; which

means, the lack of a particular source in one region could be compensated by that of the collaborated locality or area, attaining competitive benefits of the entire cluster as the region now possesses all the essential resources to arrange and to install the resources effectively and efficiently (Banić-Grubišić, 2012). Meyer (2004) has developed the policy findings and emphasizes induction of support systems, regional philosophy and management, resources' development and participation of local community, advertising and an explicit focus on pro-poor perspective as basic fundamentals for successful tourism development along a route. Being another factor to develop tourism routes, Meyer (2004) added the dispersal concept with the objectives:

1. To decrease stress upon central parts where major destinations are situated by alluring tourists somewhere else;
2. To diffuse expenditure from tourism resources as tourists signify spending authority, and if they are attracted and drawn to new area, their visits will serve innovative prospects to businessmen and generate supplementary service opportunities. Therefore, motivating visitors to move into a destination's sphere, induce economic advantages in those destinations and supply employment and other benefits;
3. To enhance the entire beauty of a tourist destination by offering 'new' characteristics of the tourist site to its tourists, therefore defining a framework for improved marketing approaches, with the objective to raise duration of stay & overall expenditure.

In addition, defining the development process along the Silk Route may raise the prospect for the intact or induced destination as clusters create opportunities for consolidation of products, which improves the experience of the tourist and increases the competitiveness of the destination as a whole (Mathfield, 2000; Meyer, 2004). The basic purpose of tagging the tourism concept to Silk Route is connecting mutually the sequence of tourist resources and attractions available for the induced destinations in order to encourage domestic tourism by encouraging tourists to travel from one destination to other connected destination covering the complete route. In extension to this, the other perspective of taking the concept can be redefined the concept with the already known destinations in the tourism market with newer terminologies (like Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Sikkim) and their linkage to Silk Route got faded with the due

course of time. As a first priority, it is important to identify the destinations linked to the Silk Route so as to step further for the tourism enactment. The development of Silk Route as a tourism brand will provide a visual mechanism to overcome the limitations of collaborative contribution and differences of interests.

4.5 TOURISM STRUCTURE ALONG SILK ROUTE

One of the most significant efforts towards the development of Silk Routes in India is its significant contribution to enlist the details of various Silk Route sites in UNESCO world heritage. The definition of tourism along Indian Silk Route is directly or indirectly linked to the organizations engaged in destination development that are intact to it. The main organizations that could work for such concept development may include public sectors, public/private partnership, private sector etc. The public sector consists of organizations like the Ministry of Tourism, Tourism reception centers of the states or destinations intact, the Archaeology Survey of India. According to De Villiers (2000), route system or route networking is the simplest source of development & planning and the most efficient method of promoting tourism, whilst this also has numerous advantages for tourists and in Indian perspectives such partnerships may consist of the Indian Tourism development Corporation (ITDC) and Destination Management Organizations of states identified as a part of Silk Route. Also the private sector organizations like Indian Hotel Association (IHA) and Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), etc can give beneficial contribution to raise the profile of Silk Route in Indian tourism sector. The UNESCO and ASI has already taken up their role for identification and excavation of various Silk Route archaeological and tourism sites in India as they are considered part of the Silk Route, and may further attract millions of tourists and providing a major thrust to national economy.

4.6 PILLARS FOR SILK ROUTE BRANDING

- Market Escalation**

Market reinforcement is first initial step to redefine the concept of Silk Route as a holiday destination brand. However, it includes creating Silk Route image in tourism markets or tourists to induce for perceiving Silk Route as a just historical route; branding Silk Route as a tourism route as it has an amalgam of varied products that are not eminent in one product. Furthermore, collaborating the assets

may not only offers the multiplicity but also transmits to increase the demand among high-yield tourists by focusing on alternate tourism attractions like the escape, drive tourism and familiarization tourism characterized by longer stretch of travel and length of stay. Whereas the advancement towards this stance cannot be exactly be figured nevertheless, India's support for the Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM) which is one of the significant steps towards the Silk Road initiative (The Hindu, 2015), gives a cue to such initiation by Indian government.

To seek a significant position in tourism markets and enhance market dimensions to categorize futuristic aspects by expanding its aura of awareness, sees a prime importance to Silk Route development. And analysis of these propositions further requires recognition by the government and the private subdivisions so as to secure financial assistance for Silk Route's regional and international development and marketing as an example Silk Road Fund of \$40 billion has been declared and the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB), of which India is one of the founding members, is expected to support One Belt and One Road Initiative (BRI) projects (Saran, 2015) led by China. In order to disseminate information about Silk Route and its induced destinations, India authorities need a volunteered advancement so as to distinguish and characterize its identity in tourism market.

- **Silk Route Awareness and communication**

Continued growth in the tourism sector is associated with progress in consumer awareness related to community benefits and a hygienic, safer and supplementary environment friendly tourism segment (Middleton and Hawkins, 1998; UNWTO, 2001). So to determine a clear development strategy towards the Silk Route, awareness and communication to targeted market is perennial process. According to Pride (2002), creating the relationship between brand and customer is based on the communicating the tangible brand attributes, which give them the reason to believe in brand and this necessitates an operational framework to guarantee efficient communication between the authorities and tourism market so as to induce the awareness of the said route. And this may help to avoid the fragmentation between the already defined perspective of the destinations and their basic historical aspect and origin. Ample information and advertising and

promotion of any tourism along a route initiative are seen as an important foundation for flourishing route tourism (ECI Africa, 2006). On the contrary to this, awareness of induced destinations of Silk Route also relies on the fact that tourists are aware of these destinations but not in the actual sense of their relation or linkage to Silk Route but as religious or historical destinations (like Buddhist circuit). From the development point of view, it requires revitalization of knowledge among stakeholders and communities to further disseminate awareness and communications about Silk Route connectivity among tourists and stakeholders for they have been considered as crucial requirements for attracting tourists and ensuring its extensive sustainability (Meyer, 2004).

- **Silk Route Development**

Achieving the tourism support and market competitiveness again requires the development criteria for destination in aligned with Silk Route, which ultimately depends upon to increase expenditure by tourists at the intact destinations, to enhance viable benefits and to diversify Silk Route's demand. However, the staggering nature of holidays, the complex necessities of tourists and the enhancement of the circumstances that promote tourism development are evidently contributing to this procedure (UNWTO, 2001). The positive aspect of this for the India is that at individual level, the induced destinations of Silk Route like Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar etc. are already at the development stage of tourism but the renewed aspect of Silk Route is foremost important so as to create a distinct image of all these aligned destinations all together as a tourism route. These can be achieved through creation of logo and taglines, developing lesser known destinations, expanding its portfolio and promoting emotional appeal of Silk Route among tourists which further leads to create decision making aspect to travel a nation as a tourism spot (Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000). And it can further be made possible by primary and secondary touring agencies to divert frequent international travelers (FITs) by providing tailored and compact travel programme with distinction.

Innovative product development and the provision of support infrastructure has been discussed as a fundamental element for successful routes development by Meyer (2004) and if taken in consideration to Indian Silk Route, such entities are already available at some of the induced destinations and sites like Buddhist

circuit of U.P and Bihar. The determinants of destination policy, development and planning consists of eight sub-elements which provide a definition to tourism structure, vision and values, branding strategy and brand positioning, competitive analysis and collaborative approach, scrutinizing, evaluation and reviewing (Chan and Bauer, n.d.) and all these serves as an essential to direct the destination authorities to develop it in aggressive and better sustainable means (Ritchie and Crouch, 2000) and accordingly the Indian tourism sector needs to focus upon investment in different as well as compatible tourism products and services of Silk Route to sustain the market competitiveness. UNESCO in cooperation with the Archaeology Survey of India (ASI) supported project for identification of Silk Route sites in India has updated the list of twelve concerned sites in different states including southern area which has been tagged as Maritime Silk Route. Combined enactment by these authorities and tourism organization may serve a networked approach in between the identified destinations of Silk Route. A major factor is its ability to create regional initiatives based on joint strategic vision, as elaborated in the initiative for the Silk Route development and guidelines given by UNWTO Silk Route Action Plan 2012-2013.

- **Collaborative efforts and framework**

The formation and management of a destination brand have been elaborated in terms of a need for collaborative endeavors among various stakeholders (Morgan et al., 2002). Although a destination brand is an optimistic result of accords and collaboration (Prideaux and Cooper, 2002) and when it comes to the point of a route, cooperation among the authorities of interlinked destinations stands much necessary for successful and sustainable tourism. Indeed, pre-conditions for establishing a route are leadership and the establishment of a superior-quality outline of association between government and private enterprises, the particular tourism organization and local commission (Lourens, 2008). Differentiation of practices or thoughts towards tourism may lead again lead to create a gap in the awareness process as well as development process of Silk Route as according to Crouch and Ritchie (1999) tourism brand which has a vision for tourism, shares this idea with the stakeholders, recognizes its potencies and flaws, develops and apply suitable strategies, would be more competitive regardless of its initial amount of assets and resources. Additionally, a great advantage of cooperation is

that it can lessen the possibility of sending out contradictory messages that could arise some misalignments in how e.g. a city would like to be perceived (Rungo and Ulbæk, 2011). In order to define and analyze the potential, benefits and obstructions in collaboration for a development of sustainable tourism along Silk Road, it is essential to first evaluate its existing potential and the potential actually perceived by stakeholders involved in the process.

4.7 IDENTIFICATION OF BENEFITS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Keller (2000) has defined the assumed benefits as one of the characteristics of successful brand strategy. However positive image, idea or perception held by tourist about a destination is associated with the projected benefits or utilization values (Sumco and Richardson, 2011). Besides the regional cooperation among Silk Route destinations, benefits of tourism can be counted from increase of cross border cooperation with the countries it is linked like China at one end and Pakistan at the other. Such process may majorly benefit the border areas of India as these areas are generally less developed in terms of economy than the national average, so this tourism product or generally tourism, emerges as a potential development alternative (Kovács and Martyin, 2013). Revival of tourism across Silk Route would fetch fiscal flow and also raise confidence among the regions beyond discretion as it represents an outline for a complex tourism presentation of a small region and connects the tourism products in the region which just alone do not represent a special tourist attraction (Hanusz, 2009).

Tourism has been identified as one of the important economic activities in 70 percent of developing countries (World Bank's World Development Indicators, 2004). Tuning the Silk Route tourism in India relies with important considerations to extend the financial benefits more extensively and spatially by developing tourism amenities, behavior and services all along tourism routes in such a way that it will ease tourist expenditures at these halt positions in order to facilitate supplementary income and employment, both straightforwardly and ultimately (Meyer, 2004). Opportunity creation can better be explained by the example of CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) agreement 2015 between China and Pakistan which led to investment of \$46 billion in Pakistani infrastructure as Pakistan is already a part of China's Silk Road Economic Belt project, whereas such consideration or initiation is still not been elaborated by India's side.

Furthermore, the potential benefits of tourism development across Silk Route can be seen with the perspectives of:

- **Flourishing tourism across borders.** Connectivity of north-eastern and the eastern states of India could be tapped with the Chinese and Tibetan regions for creating avenues to cross cultural tourism and border tourism thus may increase the revenue for both the nations. In pursuit of this, Nathu La pass (Sikkim) exemplifies a more valuable connectivity source. Instead of being confined to one destination, tourism development of Silk route will extend the avenues for the intact destinations to acknowledge their collaborative potency.
- **Developing a sourcing point.** Aligned destinations of Silk Route will become a sourcing point for intermediary products for lesser developed destinations especially for remote areas by the involvement of community. The example of development of route tourism in Africa provides a support to the statement as it offers the opportunities for the involvement of poor communities in Africa (Lourens, 2008) for efficient tourism resource or service production.
- **Third markets accessibility.** Collaborations and partnerships in context to tourism development may help India in accessing other or third markets like China, Pakistan and Afghanistan by extending international/national tourism network across the Silk Route. Whereas, to influence the source markets there is a requirement to generate interest by developing and promoting the destinations. For example, in 1987 India was the only major non-Communist country to have been permitted by the Soviet Union to release a diplomatic situation in Central Asia to facilitate during the Festival of India, which was held in 1987-88 (Mukerji, 2012). Such initiative also gives cue to the Silk Route tourism initiative and development process, thus making it available and known to other countries as well.

This implies that there is scope for tourism across Silk Route and justify India's appeal beyond the regions to integrate more varied tourism products such as archaeological, religious and wellness etc. Though the identified destinations of India like Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh etc. are already growing in tourism sector. Since these destinations' authorities have individual approach to tourism development, the Silk Route concept needs strategic definition. This is vital for the tourism demand and for

India to shift from differentiated tourism practices towards new collaborative and coordinated tourism practices to satisfy and approach varied market sections. A creative approach to cite these benefits and opportunity linkups in terms of tourism along Indian Silk Route needs to be redesigned in making them available to tourists. Availability of above discussed resources and opportunities if more evaluated and discussed may give a rejuvenated scope for Silk Route along with the benefits of tourism. It is also a point of consideration that tourism authorities for particular destination development may differ in their approach depending upon the case which may consists all diverse activities such as the development of accommodation, tourism accessibility structure and other related activities. Because of amalgamation of so many resources and related assets; coordinated approach by the authorities is also important to ensure actual representation of the Silk Route as a complete tourism product as it subsists in veracity.

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CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

As discussed in previous chapters, the primary aims of this thesis are to define the branding strategies for Silk Route as a tourism brand in India and also perception regarding tourism promotion along Silk Route among tourists as well as stakeholders. It also intends to study the impact of Silk Route as a tourism brand. These objectives have been identified by the combined usage of secondary and primary sources. Review of literature branding strategies, destination brand development, destination awareness and destination image and impact of destinations as a brand. Very few studies give the exact propositions for destination branding. More prominently Silk Route has not yet been much focused in this perspective. So, in order to conduct an inclusive evaluation of branding strategies for Silk Route as a destination, the follow up of primary research was important. This research involved a survey through a questionnaire and focused, in particular on branding and its related factors that can be useful for Silk Route as a tourism brand. This chapter focuses on analysis and the results of the primary research. The responses obtained from the survey and profile of the targeted respondents is presented first.

This chapter is preceded with data analysis obtained through survey and factors deduction with Statistical Software for Social Sciences i.e. SPSS 22.0. And lastly, the outcomes, results and interpretation of tested hypotheses are discussed.

5.1 PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Part “A” of the survey instrument i.e. questionnaire consisted of questions concerning the demographic profile of the respondents. The respondents were asked to indicate their responses accordingly.

5.1.1 *Tourists' Demographic Profile*

Information about demography of the targeted respondents included gender, age, marital status, qualification and income (Table 5.1).

S. No	Variable	Group	No. of Respondent	Percentage (approx.)
1	Gender	Male	939	62
		Female	575	38
2	Age Groups	20 yrs-30 yrs	817	54
		30 yrs-40 yrs	560	37
		Above 40 yrs	137	9
3	Marital Status	Married	696	46
		Unmarried	818	54
4	Qualification	Professional Degree	484	32
		Post-graduate	696	46
		Graduate	242	16
		Higher Secondary	92	6
5	Income	Below Rs.20,000	635	42
		Rs.20,000-Rs.40,000	607	40
		Rs. 40,000 and Above	272	18

Table 5.1: Demographic Profile of Tourists

The sample of 1514 tourists consisted of 62% of male and 38% of female respondents. Age-wise, approx. 54% were in age 20 to 30 years, 37% percent were found to be in the age group of 30 to 40 years and rests were above forty years. Majority of respondents (54%) were unmarried. In terms of qualification, 32% were having professional degree, 46% respondents were post graduate; 16% were graduate and only 6% respondents represents higher secondary level of education. Most of the respondents belonged to two income groups that is Rs. below 20,000 (42%) and Rs 20,000-Rs 40,000 (40%).

5.1.2 Demographic Profile of Travel Agents:

S. No	Items	Group	No. of Respondent	Percentage (approx.)
1	Gender	Male	79	58
		Female	56	41.9
2	Age Groups	20 yrs-30 yrs	69	50.7
		30 yrs-40 yrs	42	30.8

		Above 40 yrs	25	18.3
3	Marital Status	Married	57	41.19
		Unmarried	79	58
4	Qualification	Professional Degree	38	28
		Post-graduate	55	40.4
		Graduate	43	31.6
		Higher Secondary	nil	nil
5	Monthly Income	Below Rs.20,000	34	25
		Rs.20,000- Rs.40,000	57	50
		Rs. 40,000 and Above	45	33.08
6	Years of service	Less than 1 yr.	23	17
		1-10 yrs.	50	36.7
		10- 20yrs	38	28
		More than 20yrs	25	18.3

Table 5.2: Demographic Profile of Travel Agents

The sample of 136 travel agents consisted of 58% of male and 41% of female respondents. Age-wise, 50% were in age 20 to 30 years, 30% of the respondents were found to be in the age group of 30 to 40 years and rest have been found to be above forty years. 58% (approx.) were unmarried and 41% were married. In terms of qualification, 28% (approx.) were having professional degree, 40% respondents were post graduate, and 31% were graduates only. 25% of the respondents have monthly income < Rs. 20000, 50% have income from Rs 20,000 to Rs 40,000 (monthly) and 33% are having >Rs. 40000. Out of 136 targeted respondents, majority (approx. 36%) of the travel agents are having 1-10 years of service.

5.2 ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH DATA

This segment represents descriptive information, outcomes of analysis of factors conducted on selected variables related to branding strategies, image, awareness and communication brand development as well as impact of Silk Route variables, and the result analysis attained from hypotheses testing.

5.2.1 Silk Route Awareness

The Section B of the survey instrument consisted question related to the awareness of targeted population about Silk Route. Respondents were asked to indicate their knowledge about Silk Route.

Items	Frequency	Percent (%)
Heard about the Silk Route	Yes	528
	No	1122
	Total	1650
Know that India falls in the Silk Route	Yes	147
	No	381
	Total	528

Table 5.3: Silk Route Awareness among Tourists and Travel Agents

The analysis indicated that only 32% of the respondents have heard about Silk Route and out of them only 28% knew about India's linkage to Silk Route. After reading the information pamphlet provided to them along with questionnaire, the respondents were asked whether they have attained the basic idea of Silk Route. The response was raised to 1650 in number towards "Yes" option available.

5.3 EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

Section C, D and E of the questionnaire consisted of questions related to Perception developed about Silk Route Tourism, Brand Development and Destination Communication. To obtain the structural validity of the scale for various constructs involved in branding of Silk Route exploratory factor analysis was conducted on three constructs i.e. Brand Perception, Brand Development and Destination Brand Communication. By performing Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), the amount of dimensions and structure of principal factors are recognized (Suhr and Shay, 2009).

At first, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of sampling adequacy test for data appropriateness and its structure was assessed for the factor analysis. Whereas, Bartlett Sphericity test was performed to analyze the normal distribution of data.

5.3.1 Factor Analysis of Perception towards Silk Route Tourism:

KMO and Bartlett's Sphericity Test		
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.751
Bartlett's Sphericity Test	Approx. Chi-Square	1505.088
	df	91
	Sig.	.000

Table 5.4: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test analysis for Perception towards Silk Route Tourism.

The above Table 5.4 depicts that the KMO measure for sampling adequacy was analyzed to be 0.751 and the Bartlett Sphericity Test (χ^2) was found to be 51505.088 ($p<.01$) which can be considered significant, thus supporting the data appropriateness for further analysis.

Principal component of EFA (Exploratory Factor Analysis) was applied to find out the factors related to present study. If the communality of an item is less than .40, it may be because of the reason that a) it is not associated with other items or b) it recommends an added factor that should be investigated (Osborne and Costello, 2009). However, all the variables were found to have factor loadings $< .40$ and hence were found relevant for factor analysis.

	Initial	Extraction
will help to spread awareness about lesser known/unknown induced destinations in it	1.000	.547
could be developed as an autonomous tourist destination	1.000	.490
Create more job opportunities for the people.	1.000	.741
increase the pace of development of the areas under it	1.000	.762
will bring more investment opportunities to induced destinations	1.000	.617

boost trade relations among intact destinations	1.000	.658
will help in sustainable and integrated development of induced destinations.	1.000	.378
Can reinforce political relations among the induced destinations	1.000	.657
Increase the Social status of the local people especially lesser developed areas under it.	1.000	.671
Increase the quality of life of the local people.	1.000	.652
Will help to develop cross cultural relations among destinations at national as well as international level. will help in the rehabilitation of historical and cultural assets that have been destroyed due to lack of attention	1.000	.472
Increase the credibility of Indian Tourism Market	1.000	.743
Will help the growth of economies of the destinations	1.000	.677
		.685

Extraction Technique: PCA (Principal Component Analysis).

Table 5.5: Communalities Extraction for Perception towards Silk Route Tourism.

Number of Factors	Eigen Values of each factor	% age of Variance	Cumulative %age of Variance
1	4.125	29.464	29.464
2	2.317	16.553	46.018
3	1.267	9.050	55.068
4	1.042	7.441	62.509

Table 5.6: Extraction Results of Four Factors of Perception Towards Silk Route Tourism

On the whole, varimax rotation method deducted only four factors containing eigen values greater than or above 1. The calculated MSA (Measure of Sampling Adequacy) value was 0.751 which was above the adequate level of .50. And also the Cumulative percentage of variance was 62.509%. Table 5.6 depicts the cumulative percentage of variance for the deducted four-factors.

	Variables	Rotated loadings			
		F1	F2	F3	F4
	Increase the pace of development of the areas under it.	.827			
Economic Benefits (PSR1)	Increased investment opportunities to induced destinations.	.772			
	Create more job opportunities for the people.	.759			
	Boost trade relations among intact destinations	.752			
	Could be developed as an autonomous tourist destination.	.563			
	Increase the quality of life of the local people.		.784		
Social Benefits (PSR2)	Increase the Social status of the local people especially lesser developed areas under it.		.783		
	Can reinforce political relations among the induced destinations.		.707		
	Will help in sustainable and integrated development of induced destinations.		.487		

Cultural Benefits (PSR3)	Help in the rehabilitation of historical and cultural assets that have been destroyed due to lack of attention.				.824
	Increase the credibility of Indian Tourism Market.				.807
	Will help the growth of economies of the destinations.				.823
Induced Benefits (PSR4)	Will help to spread awareness about lesser known/unknown induced destinations in it.				.619
	Will help to develop cross cultural relations among destinations at national as well as international level.				.425
	Extraction Technique: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Technique: Varimax Rotation with Kaiser Normalization. a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.				

Table 5.7: Rotated Component Matrix^a for Silk Route Tourism Perception

Component	1	2	3	4
1	.674	.569	.317	.347
2	-.667	.386	.632	.085
3	.013	-.622	.296	.724
4	.317	-.374	.642	-.589

Extraction Technique: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Technique: Varimax Rotation with Kaiser Normalization.

Table 5.8 Component Transformation Matrix

Table 5.8 indicates the four-factor solution and related variables with the ultimate factor elucidation together with factor loadings. 1st factor (PSR1) has 5 items, 2nd factor (PSR2) has four and 3rd factor (PSR3) consists of two items and 4th factor (PSR4) has only three items.

5.3.2 Factor Analysis for Silk Route Brand Development

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.739
Bartlett's Sphericity Test	Approx. Chi-Square	863.262
	df	36
	Sig.	.000

Table 5.9: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test analysis for Silk Route Brand Development

KMO test for adequacy of selected sample was conducted again for destination brand development. The KMO measure was calculated to 0.739 and the Bartlett Test of Sphericity (χ^2) was calculated to 863.262 ($p < .01$) which was found significant (Table 5.9). The measures depicted the data appropriateness for further analysis.

Again, Exploratory Factor Analysis was performed to define various factors related to destination brand development.

	Initial	Extraction
should have attractive logo or slogan	1.000	.523
Highlighting Emotional Appeal of a destination add value to a brand.	1.000	.468
Positive image of the Silk destination should be incarnated.	1.000	.709
Good status of a destination increases its pace of development as a brand.	1.000	.691

Customs and traditions of the local people.	1.000	.620
Good Infrastructure Availability.	1.000	.365
Continuous marketing and information dissemination.	1.000	.553
Analysis of Areas of enhancement.	1.000	.468
Expanding destination portfolio.	1.000	.670

Extraction Technique: PCA (Principal Component Analysis).

Table 5.10: Communalities Extraction for Destination Brand Development

No. of Factors	Eigen Values	%age of Variance	Cumulative %age of Variance
1	3.212	35.688	35.688
2	1.855	20.616	56.305

Table 5.11: Extraction Results of Two Factors of Silk Route Brand Development

VARIMAX rotation was conducted on nine variables for Destination brand development. Two factors having Eigen value above 1 were extracted. The percentage of explained variance was 56.305. The above Table 5.11 depicts the cumulative variance for percentage for the two-factor solution.

Factors	Variables	Rotated Loadings	
		F1	F2
Brand Identity (BD1)	Positive image of the Silk destination should be incarnated.	.842	
	Good status of a destination increases its pace of development as a brand.	.822	
	Customs and traditions of the local people.	.776	
	Should have attractive logo or slogan.	.711	
	Highlighting Emotional Appeal of a destination add value to a brand	.682	
	Good Infrastructure Availability	.432	
Brand Presentation (BD2)	Expanding destination portfolio		.817
	Continuous marketing and information dissemination.		.742
	Analysis of Areas of enhancement		.684
Extraction Technique: PCA (Principal Component Analysis). Rotation Technique: Varimax Rotation with Kaiser Normalization.			
a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations			

Table 5.12: Rotated Component Matrix^a for Silk Route Brand Development

Table 5.12 shows two factors and their related items or variables with final factor solution along with factor loadings. First factor (BD1) has six variables and Second Factor (BD2) has three variables/items.

Component Transformation Matrix		
Component	1	2
1	.977	.213
2	-.213	.977

Extraction Technique: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Technique: Varimax Rotation with Kaiser Normalization.

Table 5.13: Component Transformation Matrix for Brand Development

5.3.3 Factor Analysis for Destination Brand Communication

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.727
Bartlett's Sphericity Test	Approx. Chi-Square	1192.167
	df	45
	Sig.	.000

Table 5.14 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test analysis for Destination Brand communication

Factor analysis run for Destination brand communication the KMO (MSA) was defined to 0.727 which meets the requirement for factor analysis as it was above .50 (Table 5.14). And Bartlett's test for Sphericity (χ^2) was calculated to 1192.167 ($p<.01$) which was significant for further analysis process.

	Initial	Extraction
Designing a logo and tagline for Silk Route	1.000	.721
Logo of Silk Route will assist people to recognize it better	1.000	.618
Organizing media familiarization tours	1.000	.794
Organizing educational and research conferences	1.000	.723
Providing a guidebook to serve as reference	1.000	.655
Umbrella marketing may serve as an initial step to communicate	1.000	.376
Destination videos, television commercials and collaterals	1.000	.540

Adapting social media	1.000	.813
Adapting celebrity endorsement	1.000	.692
Promoting Signatures and Taglines of Silk Route in varied languages	1.000	.677

Extraction Technique: PCA (Principal Component Analysis).

Table 5.15: Communalities Extraction Destination Brand Communication

Table 5.16 presents the cumulative variance percentage for 3 factor solution. Using VARIMAX rotation on nine variables, three factors having Eigen value above 1 were deducted.

No. of Extracted Factors	Eigen Values	%age of Variance	Cumulative % of Variance
1	3.769	37.695	37.695
2	1.690	16.898	54.592
3	1.149	11.493	66.086

Table 5.16: Extraction Results of three Factors of Destination Brand Communication

Factors	Variables	Rotated Loadings		
		F1	F2	F3
Brand Familiarization (BC1)	Organizing educational and research conferences	.843		
	Organizing media familiarization tours	.817		
	Designing a logo and tagline for Silk Route	.803		
	Providing a guidebook to serve as reference	.779		
	Adapting social media			.892

Brand Recognition (BC2)	Promoting Signatures and Taglines of Silk Route in varied languages		.773	
	Destination videos, television commercials and collaterals		.708	
	Logo of Silk Route will assist people to recognize it better		.471	
	Adapting celebrity endorsement		.770	
Brand Endorsement (BC3)	Umbrella marketing may serve as an initial step to communicate		.462	

Extraction Technique: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Technique: Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Table 5.17: Rotated Component Matrix^a for Destination Brand Communication

Table 5.17 present three factors and their associated variables with the final factor solution and factor loadings. The Rotated Matrix defines three factors for destination brand communication. Factor 1 & 2 has four variables/items and factor 3 consisted of two variables or items.

Component Transformation Matrix

Component	1	2	3
1	.730	.669	.139
2	-.650	.617	.444
3	.211	-.414	.885

Extraction Technique: PCA (Principal Component Analysis).

Rotation Technique: Varimax Rotation with Kaiser Normalization.

Table 5.18: Component Transformation Matrix for Destination Brand Communication

5.4 PERCEPTION EVALUATION FOR SILK ROUTE TOURISM

Respondents were requested to specify their perception about Silk Route tourism if promoted as a destination brand. They were requested to specify their level of Perception about Silk Route on 5-point likert scale (where 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). Table 5.13 depicts mean and standard deviation of the perception towards Silk Route tourism.

S. no	Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	Silk Route tourism will help to spread awareness about lesser known/unknown induced destinations in it.	3.42	0.78
2.	Silk Route could be developed as an autonomous tourist destination.	3.67	0.85
3.	Silk Route Tourism will help to create more job opportunities for the people of induced destinations.	3.71	0.83
4.	Silk Route Tourism will increase the pace of development of the areas under it.	3.65	0.64
5.	Silk route Tourism will bring more investment opportunities to induced destinations.	3.68	0.90
6.	Putting Silk Route into tourism acumen will boost trade relations among intact destinations	3.76	0.86
7.	Silk Route Tourism will help in sustainable and integrated development of induced destinations	3.71	0.83
8.	Promoting Silk Route tourism can reinforce political relations among the induced destinations	3.78	0.86
9.	Promoting Silk Route as a tourist	3.59	0.55

	destination will increase the Social status of the local people especially lesser developed areas under it.		
10.	Promoting Silk Route Tourism will also increase the quality of life of the local people.	3.76	0.86
11.	Silk Route may also help to develop cross cultural relations among destinations at national as well as international level.	3.42	0.78
12.	Silk Route Tourism will help in the rehabilitation of historical and cultural assets that have been destroyed due to lack of attention.	3.67	0.85
13.	Silk Route brand may also increase the credibility of Indian Tourism Market	3.68	0.90
14.	Developing tourism along Silk Route will help the growth of economies of the destinations	3.76	0.86

Table 5.19: Mean and Standard for each variable for Perception towards Silk Route Tourism

No.	Factor	Mean*	Standard Deviation**	Alpha values
PSR1	Economic benefits	3.69	1.10	0.827
PSR 2	Social benefits	3.71	0.15	0.771
PSR3	Cultural benefits	3.67	0.030	0.695
PSR4	Induced benefits	3.53	0.046	0.710

*=Mean **= Standard deviation

Table: 5.20 Mean and Standard deviation for four factors of Perception towards Silk Route Tourism

In order to clarify the perception of respondents towards Silk Route tourism in terms of economic benefits, social benefits, cultural benefits, and other induced benefits, the descriptive analysis like mean value and standard deviation is applied which indicates the data variance and also facilitates to understand respondents' perception (tourists and travel agents) towards Silk Route tourism which further helps develop it as a destination brand. The values obtained for mean and standard deviation itself helps to clarify the above statement, as the overall values of mean and standard deviation for economic benefits (PSR1=3.69*/0.101**), Social benefits (PSR2=3.71*/0.150**), Cultural benefits (PSR3=3.67*/0.03**), Induced benefits (PSR4=3.53*/0.046**) (Table 5.20). Moreover the reliability test was also conducted for derived factors (table 5.20). All the factors define their consistency level as reliability coefficients range between .50 to .90 has been reported to be adequate (Helms et al., 2006).

5.5 EVALUATION OF DESTINATION BRAND DEVELOPMENT

S no.	Variables	Mean	Standard deviation
1.	A destination should have attractive logo or slogan	3.67	0.85
2.	Highlighting Emotional Appeal of a destination add value to a brand	3.72	0.83
3.	Positive image of the Silk destination should be incarnated among tourists and stakeholders for its branding.	3.65	0.64
4.	Good status of a destination increases its the pace of development as a brand	3.67	0.91
5.	Customs and traditions of the local people helps in branding of a destination	3.41	0.78
6.	Good Infrastructure Availability also supports effective brand development of a destination	3.72	0.83
7.	Continuous marketing and information dissemination boost destination	3.67	0.91

	development.		
8.	Analysis of Areas of enhancement forms a basis for brand development process	3.61	0.56
9.	Expanding destination portfolio as per emerging market trends enhances development of a destination	3.76	0.86

Table 5.21: Mean and Standard deviation for variables of Brand Development

No.	Factor	Mean*	Standard Deviation**	Alpha Value
BD 1	Brand image	3.64	0.046	0.906
BD2	Brand Presentation	3.68	0.189	0.705

*= Mean, **= Standard Deviation

Table 5.22: Mean and Standard deviation of two factors of Brand Development

Responses for Brand development was also evaluated on 5-point likert scale (from 1= highly disagree to 5=highly agree). To define the brand development, the descriptive analysis consisting mean/average value and standard deviation which depicts the variance of the selected data has been applied. The mean/average values and standard deviation itself define and clarify required dimensions for brand development, as the mean value and standard deviation for the Destination Brand Image (BD1=3.64*/0.046**), Brand Presentation (BD2=3.68*/0.189**) (Table 5.22). Cronbach alpha (Table 5.16) test defined the general level of acceptance of derived factors as the alpha value for both the factors are above .70.

5.6 DESTINATION BRAND COMMUNICATION EVALUATION FOR SILK ROUTE

S. No.	Questions/Variables	Mean	Standard deviation
1.	Designing a logo and tagline for Silk Route will help to make people aware about it	3.45	0.79
2.	Logo of Silk Route will assist people to recognize it better	3.67	0.84

3.	Organizing media familiarization tours to generate editorial coverage in local, state and national publications induces a well defined communication for destination	3.71	0.80
4.	Organizing educational and research conferences regarding Silk Route will help people to know better about Silk Route	3.66	0.69
5.	Providing a guidebook to serve as reference for local residents, researchers, students and travellers gives clarity about the silk route	3.62	0.89
6.	Umbrella marketing may serve as an initial step to communicate the Silk Route brand among tourists.	3.75	0.85
7.	Destination videos, television commercials and collaterals may help to transmit the look, sound and feel of the Silk Route brand	3.59	0.85
8.	Adapting social media may help to communicate the Silk Route to the larger tourism market	3.75	0.82
9.	Adapting celebrity endorsement will help to induce relevance of Silk Route and services effectively	3.63	0.62
10	Promoting Signatures and Taglines of Silk Route in varied languages will help to spread effective information about Silk Route.	3.63	0.89

Table 5.23: Mean and Standard deviation for each variables of Destination Brand Communication

No.	Factor	Mean*	Standard Deviation**	Alpha Values
BC1	Brand Familiarization	3.61	0.08	0.820
BC2	Brand Recognition	3.66	0.029	0.763
BC3	Brand Endorsement	3.69	0.162	0.701

Table 5.24: Mean and Standard deviation of three factors of Destination Brand Communication

Descriptive analysis is applied to define the Destination Brand Communication. Mean and standard deviation is applied which defines the variance of the data for destination brand communication for Indian Silk Route. The calculated mean/average values and standard deviation itself clarify and define the appropriate initiatives for brand communication of Silk Route, as the mean value and standard deviation for the brand familiarization (BC1=3.61*/0.081**), Brand recognition (BC2=3.66*/0.029**) and Brand endorsement (BC3= 0.162*/0.701**) (table 5.24). Cronbach alpha of all the derived factors are above .70 or >.70 which again indicates general level of acceptance

5.7 HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Hypothesis 1: *There exists a considerable positive association between Destination Brand Communication (BC) and Perception for Silk Route tourism (PSR)*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.719 ^a	.517	.516	.24512

a. Predictors: (Constant), BC3, BC2, BC1

Table 5.25: Model Summary for Destination Brand Communication & Brand Perception

Model summary (Table 5.25) indicates the simple correlation between Destination Brand Communication and Perception towards Silk Route Tourism. R value (.719) represents a relative degree of correlation between the two. Regression analysis explains the coefficient of determination, $R^2=.517$. This implies that 51% of the variation in the respondents' Perception towards Silk Route tourism (PSR) is described by regression analysis and rest 49% of the variation is by error.

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	105.809	3	35.270	587.031	.000 ^b
Residual	98.894	1646	.060		
Total	204.704	1649			

a. Dependent Variable: PSR

b. Predictors: (Constant), BC1, BC2, BC3

Table 5.26 Anova analysis for Perception towards Silk Route and Destination Brand Communication

Anova table (5.26) represents the significance of regression model. As the $p<0.05$, the regression model on the whole statistically significantly predicts the dependent variable, i.e. Brand Communication (BC) using Perception about Silk Route (PSR), [$F(3, 1646)=587.031$].

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Beta	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
1 (Constant)	.780	.073		10.673	.000
BC1	.430	.015	.539	29.582	.000
BC2	.153	.012	.222	12.216	.000
BC3	.209	.013	.279	16.217	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Perception towards Silk Route tourism (PSR)

Table 5.27: Coefficient Analysis Brand Communication and Perception about Silk Route

The multiple regression predict respondents' perception from Brand Familiarization (BC1), Brand Recognition (BC2) and Brand Endorsement (BC3). These variables were statistically predicted as $F= 587.031$ and were found significant, $p<.0005$ and $R^2 = .517$. All the three predictors added statistically significantly to the calculation as $p< .05$. However, positive sign defines that there is a positive as well as direct relationship of Destination Brand Communication and Perception towards Silk Route (Table 5.27). This implies that destination brand communication has a positive impact on Perception towards Silk Route tourism.

Furthermore, among the three variables in terms of Brand communication, Brand recognition (BC1) ($\beta=.539$) uniquely contributes largely and is followed by Brand endorsement (BC3) ($\beta=.279$) and Brand Recognition (BC2) ($\beta=.222$). In other words

brand recognition is the key determinant in predicting respondents' perception for silk route tourism.

Thus the hypothesis "**There is a positive relationship between Destination Brand Communication (BC) and Perception towards Silk Route tourism (PSR)**" stands accepted.

Hypothesis 2: Perception towards Silk Route Tourism (PSR) has a positive impact on Brand Development (BD).

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.761 ^a	.579	.578	.23554

a. Predictors: (Constant), PSR4, PSR1, PSR3, PSR2

Table 5.28: Model Summary for Brand Development & Perception for Silk Route Tourism

The *R* value symbolizes a simple correlation and is 0.761, which defines a relative degree of correlation (Table 5.28). Regression analysis indicates the coefficient of determination i.e. $R^2=0.579$. This represents that 57% of the variation in Destination Brand Development is described by regression and the rest 43% of variation is by error.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	125.722	4	31.431	566.526	.000 ^b
	Residual	91.264	1645	.055		
	Total	216.986	1649			

a. Dependent Variable: BD

b. Predictors: (Constant), PSR4, PSR1, PSR3, PSR2

Table 5.29: Anova analysis for Destination Brand Development and Perception towards Silk Route Tourism

Further Anova table (5.29) define that the dependent variable is significantly and appropriately predicted by the regression model. Anova analysis indicates the statistical significance of regression model to predict Brand development (BD, dependent variable)

as $p < 0.05$ using independent variable i.e. Perception towards Silk Route [$F (4, 1649) = 566.526$].

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
1 (Constant)	1.045	.065		16.030	.000
PSR1	.077	.011	.125	7.007	.000
PSR2	.075	.016	.126	4.559	.000
PSR3	.050	.022	.052	2.244	.025
PSR4	.507	.029	.582	17.368	.000

a. Dependent Variable: BD

Table 5.30: Coefficient Analysis for Brand development and Perception for Silk Route Tourism

Multiple regression depicts brand development from respondents' Perception for silk route as Economic benefits (PSR1), Social benefits (PSR2), Cultural benefits (PSR3) and induced benefits (PSR4). These variables were statistically predicted as $F = 566.526$ and have been found significant, $p < .0005$ and $R^2 = .579$ (Table 5.30). All the four predictors added statistically significantly to the calculation as $p < .05$. However, the positive sign defines that there is a positive and direct association between respondents' perception towards Silk Route Tourism and Brand Development of Silk Route (Table 5.30). This implies that Perception towards Silk Route has an impact on Brand development.

Furthermore, among the four variables, in terms of Perception, Induced benefits (PSR4) ($\beta = .582$) significantly contributes more and is followed by Social benefits (PSR3) ($\beta = .126$) and Economic benefits (PSR2) ($\beta = .126$) (table 5.24).

In other words, Perception of the respondents in relation to Induced benefits, social benefits and economic benefits determines the brand development of Silk Route. Hence, the result of regression analysis supports the H2 of the study.

In other words hypothesis "**Perception towards Silk Route Tourism and (PSR) has a positive impact on Brand Development (BD).**" stands accepted.

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CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, SUGGESTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This chapter deals with the major findings related to Silk Route awareness, perception, brand development and brand communication. These findings have emerged after data analysis in the previous chapter. In addition, implications and limitations of this study have been discussed. Recommendations for future research and conclusions are also discussed.

6.1 SUMMARY

Tourism in India has observed a significant development over the last few years. Significance of development of travel across the world as well as India has been led by the connectivity term that once evolved in the form of Silk Route. This route is one of the major reasons for trade and cultural exchange between the various countries like China, India, Persia and Rome and has set a historical remark. Whereas shifting trends and choices led the low usage of Silk Route and by the time the concept became dormant and unprivileged part of history. However, the emergence of tourism concept elicits the way to reincarnate the Silk Route for the travel world.

The countries like China and Uzbekistan are already working on the projects of Silk Route development. Whereas Indian scenario is still at nascent stage and needs to understand its privilege of being a part to such historical route that can become an indefinite asset for tourism which further arises the requirement for defining its identity and involvement towards Silk Route. All these factors underscore the need for research to evaluate the awareness and perception of tourists and DMOs about of Silk Route if developed as a tourism brand. Assessment of the latest research on the Silk Route and its related aspects revealed its trade and historical perspective only whereas it's branding as a tourism

destination needs evaluation and exploration. Present study therefore, endeavors to rectify the dearth of branding strategies literature.

The changing trends and increased competitive scenario accentuated the need for an effective destination brand creation, strategy formulation and identity development. As identified in chapter 1, this thesis primarily aims to identify the destinations that had remained and are the parts of Silk Route in India. Also it intends to explore the factors that can be used or may influence for strategic branding of Silk Route as a tourism destination in India. Numerous approaches were used to evaluate the branding perspective for Silk Route: tourism literature and statistics relating to worldwide and Indian tourism were reviewed. This is considered to be an extension of four constructs i.e. awareness, Perception of Silk Route Tourism (brand/destination), brand development of Silk Route and Brand Communication. The importance of branding a destination and its identified factors were examined through a data review obtained from secondary sources discussed in chapter 2 and all through the thesis all this served to highlight the most appropriate process for attaining strategic approach to brand a destination as Silk Route (chapter 3).

Chapter 2 of the thesis elaborates the factors required for the branding process of a destination and further their relevance to the Silk Route. Awareness and perception forms the basis for the branding of destination because of the approach they affect on the level of communication and further development. This implies that perception and communication and awareness studies are a prerequisite to a successful destination branding. At the initial stage of brand creation, positive perception has been determined to be studied and analyzed. However, brand management consideration has been conducted and studied in reference to destination management organizations' participation and role in destination branding. Also the brand communication is important to make the tourists attract to a destination(s) and thus has been considered as one of the important aspects of silk route branding study.

The potential and prospects for tourism along Silk Route has been drafted in chapter 4 of the thesis followed by its tourism benefits and opportunity analysis. This chapter emphasizes the types of tourism that can further be promoted and developed across the identified destinations and can be offered altogether as a complete package to the tourists.

This chapter has further been preceded with the analysis of tourism structure in India across the route. For the branding of silk route in India, four support factors have been identified as pillars for branding strategy i.e. market escalation, silk route awareness and communication, silk route development and collaborative efforts and framework which includes policy formation and development.

In 5th chapter of thesis, all the constructs were further selected from pilot study for hypothesis testing. Finally, the awareness of tourists and travel agents about Silk Route destinations in India, and perceived benefits of Silk Route if developed as a tourism destination, was examined and analyzed through primary research survey (chapter 5).

6.1.1 Research Objectives and Research Questions

Moreover the answer of the major research problem was dependant on the fulfillment of six explicit research objectives. The research questions aligned to the research objectives identified are revived and the final data analysis including the summary for research questions and hypotheses tests are summarized and presented as:

1. To study the awareness of tourists and travel agents about Silk Route in India.
2. To study the perception of tourists as well as travel agents about Silk Route tourism .
3. To study the branding strategies for Silk Route as tourism brand in India.
4. To study the effect of brand communication on brand perception.
5. To study the relationship between the brand perception and brand development.
6. To suggest and recommend the various destination branding and communication strategies.

The above research objectives were further been elaborated and fulfilled with support of answers to following research questions:

1. Are the tourists and travel agents at the induced destinations aware about Silk Route and its linkage in India?
2. What is the perception of respondents towards silk route as a tourism brand in India?
3. Does respondents' perception towards Silk Route tourism as a brand affect brand development of Silk Route in India?

4. Is there any relationship between respondents' Perception (Brand) towards Silk Route tourism and Brand Communication?

These research questions were drafted and elaborated with the help of secondary and primary data gathering and evaluated with methodological standpoint of research process. Summary of the findings of the pretesting are presented in section 6.1.2. Implications are elaborated in a separate section (6.4) and recommendations in consideration to Silk Route that are essential to substitute the identified gaps are proposed in section 6.7. And the overall conclusion of the study is given in brief in section 6.6.

6.1.2 Pretests

During pilot study, four constructs for branding Indian Silk Route used in this study were found to be valid and appropriate for the target sample. Assessments of the Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate of each dimension signified a Cronbach Alpha value more than 0.70 and hence were further used for study analysis. It was also found that providing questionnaire could not generate the appropriate responses, so an additional information pamphlet was added for final survey.

6.1.3 Final Survey

The final survey was conducted in Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim as targeted destinations to examine the hypothesis of the study. In totality 1650 complete responses were received from Tourists and Travel agents available at these three destinations.

At first more than half of the respondents indicated that they never had heard about Silk Route and same is the case with the respondents who knew about Silk Route but were not aware about India's linkage to Silk Route i.e. out of 528 number of respondents who had heard about Silk Route, 72% were not aware that India falls in Silk Route (Table 5.3).

After reading the information provided with the questionnaire the respondents were again asked whether they got the basic idea/knowledge about the Silk Route concept. The 1650 respondents selected option "yes" which indicated 14% increment to the responses for basic idea about Silk Route. Also the respondents who are somehow aware about the Silk

Route or have heard about Silk Route have very less knowledge India's linkage to Silk Route. This indicates the need for creating awareness among tourists as well travel agents so as to develop induced/aligned destinations of Silk Route in its ethnic form in India.

Before the hypotheses analysis, data from respondents who indicated "No" to attainment of basic idea even after reading the information brochure given were excluded from the hypotheses testing. If respondents don't have any clue about Silk Route, they don't have an idea about its branding. In this case, we can hardly investigate any brand strategy or their perception about a brand they are unaware or have not even heard.

6.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

- 1. Are the tourists and travel agents at the induced destinations aware about Silk Route and its linkage in India?***

The study data indicates a very low awareness among tourists as well as travel agents about Indian Silk Route beyond the fact that these travel agents are working /in service from one to twenty years. Low awareness of a brand means consumers do not have any knowledge about the brand (Bowie and Buttle, 2013). It's a hard earned fact that they have not been informed or told about the basic essence of the destinations (Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim) and their linkage to historical Silk Route. So before introducing or developing a destination, brand awareness level sets target for type and level of communication or brand development strategies to be employed.

- 2. What is perception of respondents towards silk route as a tourism brand in India?***

The results obtained in this study signified that when tourists and travel agents were asked to tell their perception about tourism, they assumed or perceive about Silk Route if promoted as a tourism brand. Being an underprivileged Silk Route concept in India, the perception towards Silk Route and its impact (perceived) has been studied on 5-point likert scale (where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree).

Further, four factors were extracted by factor analysis that indicated the perceived benefits held by respondents towards Silk Route tourism if developed or

promoted as a brand i.e. economic benefits/impacts (Mean=3.69), Social benefits/impacts (Mean=3.71), Cultural benefits/impacts (Mean=3.67) and Induced benefits/impacts (Mean=3.53). In fact authors like Crandall (1994); Farrell and Runyan (1991); Mathieson and Wall (1982); Andereck (1995); Ap and Crompton (1998) in their studies have provided these items as dimensional scales to tourism development process. In particular political relations attain a high degree of agreement by the respondents (Mean=3.78) followed by boost in trade relations (Mean=3.76), increase in quality of life (Mean=3.76) and economic growth (Mean=3.76). Overall respondents' perceptions are highly inclined towards economic (Mean=3.69) and social benefits (Mean=3.71) of Silk Route tourism. However many researchers like Witt (1990); Tosun (2002); Weaver and Lawton (2001), etc. have identified both negative and positive tourism impacts but the preliminary stage perception always levied on benefit or positive impacts of tourism at a destination (Kim, 2002). So the result can also be said to be aligned with the literature.

3. *Does respondents' perception towards Silk Route tourism as a brand affect brand development of Silk Route in India?*

The third question of the research addresses the impact of Perception about Silk Route as a tourism brand on its brand development. This relationship was examined through the hypothesis 2 (Perception towards Silk Route Tourism has a positive impact on Brand Development). The regression results indicated a relative and high degree of correlation among two factors (.761) (Table 5.28). However 57% of variation is explained by regression. Also the results defined a significant unit of increase/change 0.761 in Perception of respondents towards Silk Route by the change/increase in brand development of Silk Route as a tourism destination. Obtained outcome is inclined to Butler's theory (1980) of first phase of tourist area cycle of evolution i.e. destination development which indicated the positivity to be perceived by the authorities and tourists at during the first stage of development of a destination for tourism. Further, the positive sign of coefficient of correlation signifies a positive impact of Perception of respondents (including economic benefits, cultural benefits, social benefits and induced benefits) towards Silk Route on its

Brand development (Table 5.30). Moreover, Kim (2002) also defined the association among perceived tourism impacts on tourism development at various stages. On the whole this hypothesis is supported with assessment and indication of potency and course of the relationships among two dimensions of perception about Silk Route as a brand and brand development.

4. Is there any relationship between respondents' Perception (Brand) towards Silk Route tourism and Brand Communication?

This research question addresses a positive relationship between Brand Perception towards Silk Route tourism and Brand Communication (H1). For attaining the outcomes for this hypothesis of the study regression analysis was conducted. Results indicated a positive relationship of tourism Perception (Silk Route) and Destination Brand Communication. The regression equation indicates 51% of change in Perception about Silk Route brand is due to change in communication among tourists as well as travel agents as a tourism destination brand (Table 5.25). Further, the Positive sign indicates a direct as well as a positive relationship among the Perception towards Silk Route and Destination Brand Communication which include Brand Familiarization (BC1), Brand Recognition (BC2) and Brand Endorsement (BC3) (Table 5.27). However the result is reliable with Kim (2002) argument that if the people in a society negatively perceive the impacts of tourism, such negative feelings will further be communicated to other tourists or people of community and all the efforts of tourism developers for destination development may become useless and vice versa. In other words, the study findings indicate the statistical connotation of the relationship among brand perception (perceived impacts of Silk Route tourism) and brand communication, which are supported by the previous studies and available literature.

6.3 DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Overall, the results of this thesis indicate a positive relationship between the perceived impact of Silk Route tourism (as a brand) and brand communication, meaning that as tourists as well as travel agents' perception of the positive economic, social, cultural and

induced impact/benefits of Silk Route tourism changes with the change or increase in its brand communication. Findings also suggest that along with the communication, silk route development is also affected by perceived impacts of Silk Route as a destination which means more the authorities or tourists perceive the benefits/positive impacts of a brand more positively the brand will be developed.

6.4 IMPLICATIONS

Brand strategy and research has been pervasive in products and tourism service areas whereas the same concept has given very little attention in terms route(s) like Silk Route context especially in India. The study contributes to the body of knowledge and understanding, through entirely new research concerning the branding strategy and potential analysis of Silk route in India. The main objective of this study is to examine the branding strategy concept to the Silk Route as a complete circuit or destination package.

6.4.1 Managerial implications

The nature of planning becomes complex when the destinations are intact with each other along a route that has its own identity. This study provides tourism planners with valuable information about the awareness level of tourists and travel agents about the Silk Route concerning specificity of increasing their awareness level about Silk Route as well as its linkage to India.

This study offers tourism authorities with potential information regarding explicit elements related to perception of the impact of Silk Route tourism if developed as a brand in India, its development and communication process as a brand.

Findings of this thesis are of immense significance to Indian tourism development and management authorities to give a new or renewed dimension to the destinations intact with Silk Route. Tourism along the Silk Route must be developed not merely on the analysis of its benefits but also according to the unified measurements for creating it as a distinct brand. However, the concerned destinations have already been on the tourists' priority for various purposes but their identity and emergence under single concept of Silk Route may

provide a newer concept of tourism like route tourism, circuit tourism etc. in Indian tourism terminology.

6.4.2 Theoretical Implications

Most considerable implication of this study is the finding of determinants for branding for Silk Route and its destinations with the particular sub dimension involved with the perceived impacts of Silk Route tourism, and that overall Silk Route brand development and its communication domains.

Also, the findings defined the factors that form branding strategies; are multi-dimensional and vibrant. This study presented the influence of perceived impact of tourism along Silk Route on its development as a destination brand; and that communication of Silk Route as a brand may affects overall perception positively through its involved channels or constructs.

The study demonstrates the Silk Route as complete tourism brand and also focuses on benefits of developing tourism along such contemporary route. On the other hand, the also study defines a constructive approach of various factors required to develop Indian Silk route as a tourism brand.

The breakthrough of the direct effect and relationship of three dimensions of Silk Route branding gives a cue to the linkage to each other and also the channelized or strategic approach to Silk Route branding.

Present study adds to the academic/theoretical expansion in tourism aspect by validating the importance of communication theory and the development of a travel route perspective thus defining tourists' as well as stakeholders' (travel agents) perception towards its tourism. When tourists as well as stakeholders/destination management authorities perceive the positive outcomes (impacts) of tourism, then they will support for tourism brand and its development and similar is the case for Silk Route. The findings also demonstrated the required factors and elements for developing the Silk Route as a brand and further communication process that could set a base for developing brand strategies for Silk Route in India.

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

All the precautionary steps were taken to make sure that the objectivity, reliability as well as validity of the study be maintained, however some limitations could not be ruled out. These limitations need to be considered for any future references regarding the findings and implementations of the study. The major limitations include the following:

- First limitation includes the sample population of this study involved tourists and travel agents available at the three targeted destinations. However, if the local residents be involved, the results might vary.
- Moreover, if the investigation was extended to involve industry people or other stakeholders in the study, there may be difference in perceived impacts of tourism levels, Silk Route development.
- The study is conducted only Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim (India). For future research, it is suggested to branding practices in other Silk Route destinations as well. Besides, comparison between different destinations can also be examined.
- Further, the study is limited to three destinations and can be extended in other destinations as Bihar, Delhi, etc.
- In addition, the survey was conducted only on the three destinations. It is possible that if the study was further extended to conduct analysis on the other Indian destinations that are also a part of Silk Route, perception for the Silk Route tourism might vary and the possibility of change in direction of relationship with other two dimensions i.e. brand development and brand communication.
- The major drawback is the lack of personal contact with some of the respondents like travel agents in few areas of Ladakh region as field visit was not possible due to some weather conditions.
- The study is cross-sectional in nature and need to be extended to include longitudinal data in future.

6.6 CONCLUSION

Concept Silk Route tourism destination has levied on concepts of inclination of wide tourism products and service availability such as rich history, culture, archaeology as well as religious and natural sites. However, emergence of alternatives has dramatically changed the scenario of trade and thus ultimately there led a shift from Silk Route to other travel options. As a consequence the term became dormant with historical perspective only. At present destination branding is a generally adopted phenomenon in tourism development. It has emerged as a coherent dimension to create and develop destinations and make them available to the tourists. However, the adoption to the concept becomes much tricky when the term route emerges. The theoretical framework adopted in this study became a preliminary base for the analysis. It relies on the attaining the knowledge of Silk Route as a tourism product which can further be branded and consequently offered in the tourism market. As a consequence, the theory of destination branding can be also applied to Silk Route. Even it has also been considered underpinning term for the development of trade as well as cultural and traditional exchanges but considering the modernized approaches to the renewal and increase in demands for the new concepts, tourism concept in contrast to Silk Route may prove to be a significant remark.

This study has been designed to explore the field of development for Indian Silk Route and to identify the strategies which can be followed to establish it as unique tourism brand. To be in market and demand, as any tourism products it also requires recognition. As a brand, considering the complexity of Silk Route and the range of stakeholders and tourists it can be evaluated to other destination brands. Accordingly, branding routes like Silk Route adopts many of its techniques from destination branding. Primary research was designed to know the awareness level of tourists and travel agents of three targeted destinations about Indian Silk Route. This revealed very less knowledge about the Silk Route and also its linkage to India, which further led to inculcate the knowledge and awareness and its significance in tourism market. The review of literature and primary research identified brand perception, brand communication and brand development as perspective dimensions for branding Silk Route in terms of tourism. Present study significantly adds to the literature inclined to define an outlook of Silk Route as tourism destination brand.

The outcomes of present study provide several details for respondents' perception regarding the impacts of tourism along Silk Route if developed and further its overall influence and relationship with development and communication of Silk Route as a tourism brand. Elaborated on the basis of previous studies, various perceived tourism benefits/impacts were verified that determine the destination brand differently especially Silk Route. The analysis indicated the elements that affects and compiles the tourism perception among tourists and travel agents.

One of the basic postulates of developing the Silk Route as a brand is that it develops from a strong representation and perception generation. This representation should induce positivity in the tourists' mind and can easily be recognized in the market. However, the destination with influential positive perception has a prospective for gradual development. Further an effective perception creation of a brand is not possible without effective brand presentation. Influential portfolio and information dissemination of a brand extends an influential image to the consumers thus providing a lead to the brand development like Silk Route. Hence, there is a necessity for a constant development strategy for redefining its unique selling propositions aligned with contemporary definitions of tourism like route tourism etc.

The important propositions of this descriptive work includes the defining of factors that have an influence on perception of respondents about the Silk Route tourism in India as well as those elements which comprises its brand communication i.e. brand familiarization, recognition and brand endorsements that further led foundation for successful branding for Silk Route in Indian tourism market.

Raising awareness of Silk Route as an attractive tourism destination(s) by tagging the region's activities and lodging facilities under one platform may help to create effective and efficient distribution channels to promote otherwise veiled service providers at these destinations in India. On the whole, it can be concluded that if branded as a top tourism product, the Silk Route boasts a well-developed tourism market. Its rich history, distinct cultural heritage, architecture and drive charm may provide a defined tourism asset to Indian travel- trade market. Not only this, it may also help to provide a collaborative approach to

Indian destination development and may add a new perspective of tourism to the destinations that have lost their originality or identity. And also, the lost definition of India's connectivity to Silk Route gets refined. There is also a need to identify target markets, their perceptions, motivations and requirements – and the ways in which Silk Route network can attract them – through market research and analysis. Furthermore, developing the tourism circuits is on the policy considerations of the Indian Tourism Organization but a concentrated strategy for the development and sustenance of Silk Route is required.

6.7 SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of conclusions and implications drawn in this chapter (section 6.6 above), the present section represents recommendations under various sub points and further research. There is a requirement for marketing to create the awareness in an accurate and refined pattern of what the Silk Route has to offer as complete as a tourism brand in India. If a gap exists between process of all the destination development i.e. process may vary from one to another destination, there is an alternative way that the process can be first analyzed at individual destination level and then the process may be modified to collaborative level with more analytical and representative level for whole of the stretch and further brand and marketing attempts can be made to redefine such connectivity source (Silk Route) to tourism market. In addition to this, it is also important to:

- 1. *Destination(s) location identification:*** Identification of major destinations or sites of Silk Route is required to make them enlisted to the tourism list. As a consequence of insistent and continuous competition, it is important for Indian tourism authorities that Silk Route appealing tourism dimensions be identified and developed to their fullest improvement. Archaeology Survey of India is already working on such track but such initiative must be supported and substituted by local travel and development authorities as they might be better aware about such destinations' locations. Recognition and identification of destination brand serves to differentiate the brand from others. Logos and taglines serve to differentiate and define the uniqueness of product or service brands in the market and further help to identify the brand in the market. So to make the Silk Route as a brand, there is a strong requirement for

creating the logo and tagline for creating the image among tourists and hence to make them perceive destinations' aspects like facilities, services, etc. Hence, the expansion of Silk Route portfolio with respect to tourism point of view will also reveals its identity to the tourism market or targeted segment.

2. ***Analyze the tourism potential of the induced destinations:*** Tourism potential of such destinations also needs to be analyzed and evaluated so as to maintain the destination sustenance and define their present and future market position. Silk Route as tourism products has been discussed and projected as complete tourism package, which has been analyzed with the available literature and other informational sources and was confirmed with the results obtained and analyzed in this study in terms of the branding and perceived tourism benefits. Moreover, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar has already in the priority list for its Buddhist circuit. Also on the other side, Sikkim tourism authorities have already highlighted Nathu la pass and Zuluk valley for silk route connectivity. However, certain other induced destinations as in Kashmir, Ladakh etc. need to be analyzed in support of their tourism potential and their aspects for influencing the future market. These include the Buddhist sites of Parihaspora and Ushkar of Baramulla district (Kashmir, J&K), Ambaran archaeology site at Akhnoor of Jammu district (Jammu, J&K), that are almost at phase of extinction and if developed and highlighted in terms of Silk Route may serve to tourism in a great way.
3. ***Increase awareness and communication of the Silk Route destinations among tourists and local community:*** As for any product or destination, awareness among customer or tourists is foremost important. Destination assets and elements should be highlighted to receive tourists' attention through various awareness creation practices. Promotional campaigns and initiative towards marketing of Silk Route destinations should therefore be done by the usage of various marketing techniques and sources like T.V, brochures, newspapers, social media etc. Also all the amalgamated aspects of the silk route as a tourism product should be considered and represented with one title as one route with vibrant assets. All marketing and promotional efforts should be

done in contrast to conjoint destinations' representation through regional and international representative institutions. Attention should be given on how to put this process effectively so as to renew the concept of Silk Route as a complete destination or tourism brand. Findings of this thesis have shown that attractive logos and taglines and guide books and highlighting the same in various research conferences and media sources are the most vital elements for brand communication that could further make tourists and travel agents familiar with such perspective.

4. ***Define the benefits of tourism development at regional, national as well as international level:*** Development and selling propositions of a product always depends upon benefits it offers to ultimate customers. The benefits of tourism development across Silk Route should be conveyed to the regional development authorities so as to keep pace with the brand processing of Silk Route in the tourism market and making in renewed at more positive way. This thesis defines the overall benefits of silk route tourism development however the benefits analysis at particular destination or regional stage is recommended and suggested to achieve in depth knowledge and examination of the concept.
5. ***Redefine the concept:*** Refinement of the Silk Route needs to be done so as destinations that are already on the tourism list but their relation to Silk Route went missing or less highlighted gets clarity to the tourists' and development authorities. Elaborate the silk route's linkage along with the destinations as Buddhist circuit or marketing these places under the Silk Route's tagline that will restore the chronological aspects of these places as well of silk route. It may be quite difficult or tricky to redefine the already marketed destinations or sites with some other name or notion for which Buddhist circuit sets a suitable example. In extension to this celebrity endorsement and umbrella marketing has been identified as important factors to communicate which can be more effective source of brand communication and awareness creation and redefine the concept of such places at initial stage of branding.

6. *Facilitate and generate investment opportunities to develop the Silk Route tourism:*

Policy formulation and regulation for promotion and development silk route sites are required to make it ease with Silk Route tourism brand creation. However, investment options like Asian Development Bank's initiative to promote and help silk route destinations, must be sorted if possible. Such practices may serve as an add-on approach to put the silk route on Indian tourism map and policy formation for complete route.

7. *Develop a cooperative approach:* Cooperative or collaborative auras like Public Private Partnership should be drawn that makes financing for small local supply operators available for increasing tourism supply, and local entrepreneurship o as to generate a motivational perspective towards silk route site(s) promotion and development.

8. *Create a separate research unit:* Authorities need to learn from international examples like Route 66 (USA) and Tourism Route of South Africa (discussed in Chapter 4) where specific agencies are formed by the governments for development, preservation and promotion of such highways to attract more and more tourists to their native land. Both the routes are carrying their own identity among travelers. A specialized and separate research and development unit for more refined process and initial tourism business development analysis if possible should also be created if possible.

6.8 FURTHER RESEARCH

This section aims to emphasize prospects for further research. Suggestions have been given in context to Silk Route's branding as tourism destination image in India, and their application may be seen in the context to other tourism market as well. It is suggested that branding of a silk route research, which includes both qualitative and quantitative techniques be conducted in all other Indian destinations. These include the Bihar that has been a major part of Silk Route and shares a major portion of Buddhist circuit, and then other sites identified by archaeology survey of India such as Delhi, Punjab.

The perception of visitors may vary among visitors and travel agents. However overall perspectives have been taken and analyzed. It is recommended, therefore, that future perception study should focus on single segment. This would present the information regarding the types of differentiated benefits perceived by the tourists and travel agents of particular intact destination of Silk route so as to fill the analyzed gap of knowledge and indicate if a particular or differentiated pattern of development efforts are required. Concurrently, the study may also provide an insight to investigate the information regarding destination uniqueness and potential in more elaborated manner. The outcomes of such study would provide destination authorities of Silk Route to find further segments that need to develop and maintain and market so that sustenance of such tourism asset may be maintained from a long term perspective.

The differentiation of development patterns and lack of information makes it difficult for the authorities to create silk route as tourism brand in an aligned manner. The lack of attention paid to the sites related to Silk Routes and need for renovation and development of sites (historical or religious), may also weaken the developing process of Silk Route tourism in India and in fact may delay the whole process. Whereas the sites like Buddhist sites of U.P and Bihar have been marketed with religious perspective, to turn down their identification to Silk Route linkage needs a well distinct identity and marketing approach and, therefore, it is recommended that auxiliary research be carried out on this perspective.

Complexity of literature and consideration about the destination branding has influenced the study on the formation of silk route as a tourism brand; it is recommended, therefore, that research related to visitation patterns and choices (selection of a destination) be undertaken. This thesis was carried out and examined by the responses of travel agents/tour operators and tourists; it is worth taken a research on the local community (at a destination) and other institutions as well and how they perceive the various dimensions of silk route development.

From the knowledge view point, the results of this thesis reveal a very low level of awareness of Silk Route and its related destinations in India. When provided with relevant information, respondents revealed positive attitude towards the silk route as a tourism brand

and the majority of respondents depict good conception of the brand dimensions and benefits. It gives a specific clue to provide a well elaborated information source to the tourists as well as to the destination management authorities to make them get attract to and motivate them for contributing towards participating in Silk Route development and brand process. Perceptions of respondents are more positive towards the Silk Route tourism, however the other perspective including negative should be assessed and evaluated at the beginning so as to avoid negativity in future. While the various destinations are involved and tagged in Silk Route with various element and convictions, the considerations of all these assets are important for Silk Route as a tourist destination, the results suggest that they work as facade of a wider term, which may appeal to tourists all together. Promotion of all these destinations and sites are recommended. Also the identity has been revealed as a major setback to its definition. It is therefore better to promote the Silk Route destination under a single tagline and logo with definite identity reflection.

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Questionnaire

Your answers in the following questionnaire will help us to form a sound and competitive strategy of tourism development for Silk Route destinations in India and will be held confidential and used only for statistical processing.

Section A: Demographic Profile

1. Gender: Male Female

2. Age: 20 yrs-30 years 30 yrs-40 years above 40 years

3. Marital Status: Married Unmarried

4. Qualification:

Professional Degree Postgraduate Graduate Higher Secondary

5. Monthly Income:

Below Rs.20, 000 Rs. 20,000-40,000 Rs.40, 000 and above

6. For how many years have you been related to this service sector? (to be filled by Travel Agents only)

Less than 1 year 1-10 years 10- 20years More than 20years

Section B: Silk Route Awareness

1. Have you ever heard about the Silk Route? Yes No

If Yes then

2. Do you know that India falls in the Silk Route? Yes No

If No, Please refer Pamphlet* attached for information and proceed for further questions

3. Did you get basic idea/knowledge about the Silk Route concept?

Yes

No

Section C: Perception regarding Silk Route as a Destination Brand

S. no	Variables	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Silk Route tourism will help to spread awareness about lesser known/unknown induced destinations in it.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Silk Route could be developed as an autonomous tourist destination.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Silk Route Tourism will help to create more job opportunities for the people of induced destinations.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Silk Route Tourism will increase the pace of development of the areas under it.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Silk route Tourism will bring more investment opportunities to induced destinations.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Putting Silk Route into tourism acumen will boost trade relations among intact destinations	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Silk Route Tourism will help in sustainable and integrated development of induced destinations	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Promoting Silk Route tourism can reinforce political relations among the induced destinations	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Promoting Silk Route as a tourist destination will increase the Social status of the local people especially lesser developed areas under it.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Promoting Silk Route Tourism will also increase the quality of life of the local people.	1	2	3	4	5

11.	Silk Route may also help to develop cross cultural relations among destinations at national as well as international level.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Silk Route Tourism will help in the rehabilitation of historical and cultural assets that have been destroyed due to lack of attention.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Silk Route brand may also increase the credibility of Indian Tourism Market	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Developing tourism along Silk Route will help the growth of economies of the destinations	1	2	3	4	5

Section D: Brand development of Silk Route

S no.	Variables	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	A destination should have attractive logo or slogan	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Highlighting Emotional Appeal of a destination add value to a brand	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Positive image of the Silk destination should be incarnated among tourists and stakeholders for its branding.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Good status of a destination increases its the pace of development as a brand	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Customs and traditions of the local people helps in branding of a destination	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Good Infrastructure Availability also supports effective brand development of a destination	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Continuous marketing and information dissemination boost destination development.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Analysis of Areas of enhancement forms a basis for brand development process	1	2	3	4	5

9.	Expanding destination portfolio as per emerging market trends enhances development of a destination	1	2	3	4	5
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Section E: Destination Communication

S. No.	Questions/Variables	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Designing a logo and tagline for Silk Route will help to make people aware about it	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Logo of Silk Route will assist people to recognize it better	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Organizing media familiarization tours to generate editorial coverage in local, state and national publications induces a well defined communication for destination	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Organizing educational and research conferences regarding Silk Route will help people to know better about Silk Route	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Providing a guidebook to serve as reference for local residents, researchers, students and travelers gives clarity about the silk route	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Umbrella marketing¹ may serve as an initial step to communicate the Silk Route brand among tourists.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Destination videos, television commercials and collaterals may help to transmit the look, sound and feel of the Silk Route brand	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Adapting social media may help to communicate the Silk Route to the larger tourism market	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Adapting celebrity endorsement will help to	1	2	3	4	5

¹ Umbrella branding, involves marketing and selling your product lines using a single brand name. E.g. Apple works under a family, or umbrella branding strategy. The use of one brand name and the recognizable Apple logo make it easy for customers to find and identify Apple products.

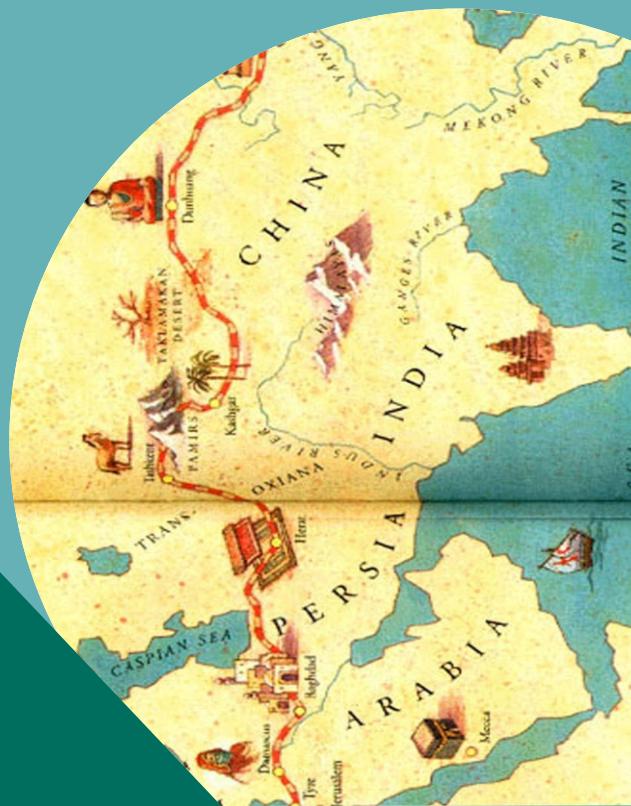
	induce relevance of Silk Route and services effectively					
10.	Promoting Signatures and Taglines of Silk Route in varied languages will help to spread effective information about Silk Route.	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you!!!!

Sikkim:

Nathu La Pass

Located at an altitude of 14,140 feet and 52kms from Gangtok, Nathula Pass was the place through which the famous Silk Route used to operate until 1962. This used to be a trade route between India and Tibet. Lines of mules used to carry silk, gold and many other items from Tibet to India and take daily essentials back to Tibet. The route in Tibet goes down the Chumbi Valley to Yathung, a place about 30kms away which used to be once a major trading township (no longer so). The fenced Indo-China border is also few meters away and you can see both Indian and Chinese soldiers guarding the border.



Vaishali Buddha Stupa, Bihar



Stupa of Rajgir



Sravasti Buddha statue



Nathula Pass, Sikkim



Prayer ceremony at Jettavana Monastery, Sravasti



SILK ROUTE

INDIAN ECSTASY

INFORMATION BROCHURE

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Jammu and Kashmir:

Khardung La, Nubra Valley

Located at an altitude of 18,379 ft, Khardung La (means Pass in Tibetan) is the world's highest motorable road and provides an access to Shyok and Nubra valleys of Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir. It serves the tourists with clean air, amazing sites and natural vistas of the valley along with the roads meandering with the mountain.



Khardung La Pass



The site of the Fourth Buddhist Council at Harwan near Srinagar



A statue of the Buddha, recovered from Harwan

Harwan:

Located at a distance of 21 km from Srinagar, Harwan provides a spectacular view of archaeology remains amidst the mountains of Srinagar District in Jammu and Kashmir. This historic place has many remarkable remains of the age old adorned tile pavements that belong to Buddhist era. The archeology depicts the outfits of the people of Buddhist era, like as close fitting turbans, loose trousers and large ear-rings thus representing the cultural influence of central Asian countries.

Parihaspora:

Located in the Baramula district of Kashmir, this Buddhist sites was developed by King Lalitaditya (695-731 AD). During his reign this place was declared as capital of Kashmir. At present, it is known as Kane Shahr which means 'city of stones'.



view of Govardanadhara temple ruins of staircases and plinth



Remains of magnificent stupas and temples of Parihaspura

Delhi:

Old Fort:

Name of Delhi province has been called for its contribution to the Silk Route in literature by the name of Indraprastha (Old Fort/Purana Quila). Archaeological survey of India has found its inscriptions and excavations in the premises of Purana Quila/ Old Fort.



Sarnath

U.P and Bihar:

Archaeology Survey of India has identified the Buddhist circuit as a part of Silk Route. The Buddhist Circuits are the Places of all High Significance Holy Sites of Buddhism; where Lord Buddha was born, attained Enlightenment, preached first Sermon and reached Nirvana. Lumbini, Bodhgaya, Sarnath and Kushinagar are the primary pilgrimage places of Buddhist Circuits associated with the life and teachings of the Lord Buddha. There are numerous other sites where the Buddha and the saints that followed traveled during his life after his transformation, which are held in deep veneration. Visitors can travel through this Buddhist Circuit today, to savor the splendid beauty and great appeal of Buddhism.

The greatest impetus to Buddha's teachings came from the Indian King Ashoka who went on a great pilgrimage visiting the important sites that are directly associated with his life, in the Footsteps of Lord Buddha. Primary amongst these holy places are Lumbini in Nepal, and Bodhgaya, Sarnath and Kushinagar in India. There are other places of lesser significance on the Footsteps of Lord Buddha visitor circuit associated closely with Buddha's life. Amongst these are Buddha's monsoon retreats of Vaishali, Rajgir and Sravasti



Buddha statue at Bodh gaya



Kushinagar

Ambaran, Jammu

This 2,000 years old archaeological sites is estimated to have evolved during the reign of Ashoka. Majjhantika on his way to Kashmir came to this place and introduced Buddhism which was once known to Kalhana as Madradesha (present Jammu), the area between Ravi and Chenab

